

Ames to Berchtesgaden

Michael Ray Peterson







Ames
to
Berchtesgaden

By

Michael Ray Peterson

For Janet and Karen.



Picture of Wilma that Ray carried with him overseas.

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Foreword

James Raymond Taylor married Wilma Fern Sanders on September 15, 1939. They lived happily, residing in Ames, Iowa. In early 1944, James, who preferred to be called Ray, was called to serve his country. He entered service on March 8, 1944. Reporting to Camp Dodge, Iowa, and then traveling to Camp Roberts, California where he took his basic training. Following Boot camp Ray was sent to Camp Chaffee, Arkansas where he was assigned to the newly formed 1269th Engineer Combat Battalion. He was a truck driver in the 2nd Platoon, A Company.

The 1269th ECB moved to southern France at the end of October 1944. The Battalion was on duty in southern France until March 1945, when it started the drive into Germany. Assigned to the 'T' Force, an intelligence assault force, the 1269th was at the front of the advancing army. It served as an arm of the Alsos Mission, which was instrumental in seizing scientists, uranium, records, and equipment of the German atomic program. The 1269th was also one of the first units to enter Munich, and the concentration camp at Dachau. Elements of the 2nd Platoon were the first to discover the stolen art treasure of Hermann Göring in a cave near Berchtesgaden.

While separated, Ray wrote Wilma everyday, and sometimes twice a day. Wilma kept all of his letters. Although the majority of the content is of Rays undying affection to her, occasionally he would write about what was going on in his part of the world. I have used those excerpts and two scrapbooks they kept from that time to create this book. The grammar is not perfect and I have made no effort to correct it since it is exactly the way he wrote. There are lapses in the letters when Wilma visited Ray in California, and when they lived together in Ft. Smith, Arkansas.

Following his service in Europe, Ray was assigned to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri where he was discharged on May 24, 1946. He returned to Wilma, and to Ames where they were upstanding members of the community. Ray left us on April 16, 1994. Wilma followed on April 12, 2004.

-Michael Ray Peterson

NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION

Registrant James Raymond Taylor Order No. 3141

has been classified in Class II-A (Until January 18, 1943)
(Insert Date for Class II-A and II-B only)

by ☒ Local Board
☐ Board of Appeal (by vote of _____ to _____)
☐ President

11-18-42, 19_____
(Date of mailing)

H. E. Erickson
Member of Local Board.

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL

Appeal from classification by local board or board of appeal must be made by signing appeal form on back of questionnaire at office of local board, or by filing written notice of appeal, within ten days after the mailing of this notice. Before appeal, a registrant may file a written request for appearance within the same ten-day period; and, if he does so, the local board will fix a day and notify him to appear personally before the local board; if this is done, the time to appeal is extended to ten days beyond the day set by the local board for such appearance.

There is a right in certain dependency cases, of appeal from appeal board decision to the President; see Selective Service Regulations.

The law requires you—To keep in touch with your local board. To notify it of any change of address. To notify it of any fact which might change classification.

D. S. S. Form 57 (Rev. 4-13-42) 16-19071-1 U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

On November 18, 1942 Ray is classified as II-A.

NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION App. not Req.

James Raymond Taylor
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Order No. 3141 has been classified in Class I-A
 (Until _____, 19_____) (Insert date for Class II-A and II-B only)

by ☒ Local Board.
☐ Board of Appeal (by vote of _____ to _____).
☐ President

JAN - 4 '44, 19_____
(Date of mailing)

J. E. Erickson
(Member of local board)

(Registrant must sign here)

The law requires you, subject to heavy penalty for violation, to have this notice, in addition to your Registration Certificate (Form 2), in your personal possession at all times—to exhibit it upon request to authorized officials—to surrender it, upon entering the armed forces, to your commanding officer.

DSS Form 57. (Rev. 3-29-43)

On January 4, 1944 he is reclassified as I-A. Acceptable for service in the Armed Forces.

Local Board No. 1
Story County 72
169
JAN 24 1944 001
Rm. 207, 304 1/2 Main St.
Ames, Iowa

(LOCAL BOARD DATE STAMP WITH CODE)



SELECTIVE SERVICE SYSTEM

Order to Report Preinduction Physical Examination

Jan 24, 1944

(Date of mailing)

The President of the United States,

To James Raymond Taylor 3141
(First name) (Middle name) (Last name) (Order No.)

GREETING:

You are hereby directed to report for preinduction physical examination at

Mun. Court Rm., City Hall, Ames, Iowa
(Place of reporting)

at 7:00 a.m., on the 4th of February, 1944
(Hour of reporting) (Day) (Month)

J. E. Erickson
(Member or clerk of Local Board)

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO REGISTRANT

Registrant who believes he has a disqualifying defect.—If you believe that you have some defect which will disqualify you for service you may, on or before the 1st day of February, 1944, appear in person at the office of the Local Board, or, if you are unable by reason of such defect to personally appear, you may submit an affidavit from a reputable physician or an official statement by an authorized representative of a Federal or State agency to the effect that such physician has personal professional knowledge or such authorized representative has official knowledge of your defect, the character thereof, and that you are unable to personally appear due to the character of the defect. The Local Board may send you to the Local Board examining physician, and, if it does so, it shall be your duty to appear at the time and place designated by the Local Board and to submit to such examination as the examining physician shall direct. If the Local Board determines that your defect does disqualify you for service you will receive a Notice of Classification (Form 57) advising you that you have been placed in Class IV-F. Unless prior to the date fixed for your preinduction physical examination, you receive such a Notice of Classification (Form 57) advising you that you have been placed in Class IV-F, you must report for your preinduction physical examination as directed.

Every registrant.—When you report for preinduction physical examination you will be forwarded to an induction station where you will be given a complete physical examination to determine whether you are physically fit for service. If you sign a Request for Immediate Induction (Form 219), and you are found qualified for service, you will be inducted immediately following the completion of your preinduction physical examination. Otherwise, upon completion of your preinduction physical examination, you will be returned to this Local Board. You will be furnished transportation and meals and lodgings when necessary. Following your preinduction physical examination you will receive a certificate issued by the commanding officer of the induction station showing your physical fitness for service or lack thereof.

If you fail to report for preinduction physical examination as directed, you will be delinquent and will be immediately ordered to report for induction into the armed forces. You will also be subject to fine and imprisonment under the provisions of section 11 of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, as amended.

If you are so far from your own Local Board that reporting in compliance with this order will be a hardship and you desire to report to the Local Board in the area in which you are now located, take this order and go immediately to that Local Board and make written request for transfer for preinduction physical examination.

Orders to report for his Physical Exam.

Prepare in Duplicate

Local Board No. 1	74
Story County	169
FEB 24 1944	001
Rm. 207, 804½ Main St. Ames, Iowa	

(LOCAL BOARD DATE STAMP WITH CODE)



Feb. 24, 1944

(Date of mailing)

ORDER TO REPORT FOR INDUCTION

The President of the United States,

To James Raymond Taylor
 (First name) (Middle name) (Last name)

Order No. 3141

GREETING:

Having submitted yourself to a local board composed of your neighbors for the purpose of determining your availability for training and service in the land or naval forces of the United States, you are hereby notified that you have now been selected for training and service therein.

You will, therefore, report to the local board named above at Mun. Court Rm, City Hall, Ames, Iowa
 (Place of reporting)

at 7:00 a. m., on the 8th day of March, 19 44
 (Hour of reporting)

This local board will furnish transportation to an induction station. You will there be examined, and, if accepted for training and service, you will then be inducted into the land or naval forces.

Persons reporting to the induction station in some instances may be rejected for physical or other reasons. It is well to keep this in mind in arranging your affairs, to prevent any undue hardship if you are rejected at the induction station. If you are employed, you should advise your employer of this notice and of the possibility that you may not be accepted at the induction station. Your employer can then be prepared to replace you if you are accepted, or to continue your employment if you are rejected.

Willful failure to report promptly to this local board at the hour and on the day named in this notice is a violation of the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, as amended, and subjects the violator to fine and imprisonment.

If you are so far removed from your own local board that reporting in compliance with this order will be a serious hardship and you desire to report to a local board in the area of which you are now located, go immediately to that local board and make written request for transfer of your delivery for induction, taking this order with you.

Member or clerk of the local board.

D. S. S. Form 150
 (Revised 1-15-43)

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 16-18271-5

Ray reports for Active duty on March 8, 1944.

Mar. 9, 1944.



UNITED STATES ARMY

Hello Honey

It sure was swell to hear your voice on the phone tonite. You can't realize how much it helped me out.

Well to start out from the beginning we got here about 3⁰⁰ PM. They took us in the recruiting station gave roll call, lined us up, measured us for uniforms, and then they fitted us out with everything in the line of clothing, shoes, cloth bags, and assigned us to our barracks and bunks. I got Virgil Rapp for my bunk partner, he has the upper bunk & I have the lower one.

We had supper at 5²⁰, then we had the best of the evening to do what we wanted inside the cage. I went to the Military Wedding. It sure was quite a wedding.

This morning they called us out of bed at 5⁰⁰ AM o-boy but that sure is in the middle of the morn. We sure have good meals down here for what you hear about the army.
(over)

First letter sent from Camp Dodge, Iowa



Ray at home with Wilma before being shipped out to Basic Training.

March 15, 1944

My Dearest Darling,

After our first night on the train I feel like a million dollars. From Camp Dodge we went to Des Moines. The train stopped at Manila, Iowa. We stared out again and went through the town of Defiance. Next we stopped at Earling, Iowa. We haven't been able to figure out where we are going or headed even. We just stopped in Panama, Iowa.

6:30pm

March 15, 1944

We have been playing cards, shooting craps and playing poker on the side. When we stopped at North Platte we got to get off and go in the swell canteen they have there. It sure was a nice place. They served coffee and sandwiches to all service men. We are going on the U.P. Railroad.



North Platte, Nebr. Canteen, located in Union Pacific Railroad station is operated by townspeople and neighboring communities. Coffee, milk, sandwiches, cakes, candy, cigarettes and magazines are distributed by volunteer workers to service men and women traveling on the Union Pacific.

Postcard Ray sent from the North Platte Canteen.

Green River, Wyo

March 16, 1944

My Dearest Darling,

We are still going yet. We went to bed last night at Sidney, Neb and woke up this morning in Green River, Wyo. Still no definite destination given to us. This old train is really doing knots now. We must be rolling about 75 or 80, it seems like the telephone poles are just flying by. We are now in Evanston, Utah.

So long honey, XXXXX
Your loving Hubby.

Friday morning
Mar 18, 1944

My Dearest Darling,

Here we are in California now. Still haven't heard any destination as yet. We sure have a fine Captain and two mighty fine corporals in charge of the trip. Back at Ogden, Utah, while we were delayed there waiting for another train they took us off the train and showed us part of the town.

Friday 6:00 pm
Mar 18, 1944

Dearest Darling,

We are now setting in Oakland, California. We got here at 2:00 pm. The Captain ordered us off the train for a little exercise. Then we boarded a ferry and went across San Francisco Bay to the big city of San Francisco. We still haven't heard a definite destination.

So long honey, XXXXX
I love you,
Your loving Hubby

Camp Roberts, Calif.
Sunday Morn. Mar 20

My Dearest Darling,

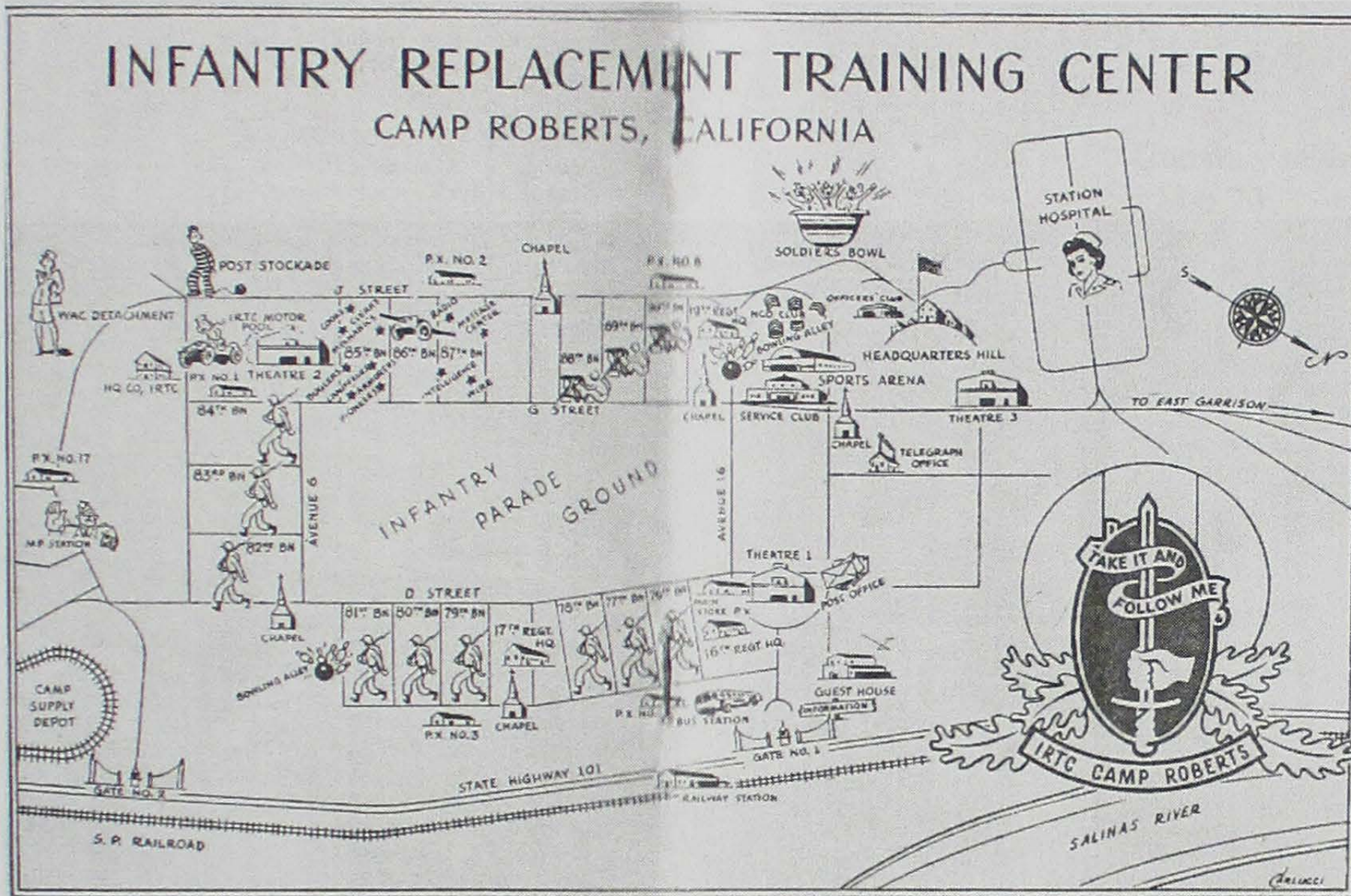
Well we finally reached our destination yesterday morning at 2:00 am. I was sure glad when we got here. I was so damn tired of riding on that train, that, I'll probably still have calluses on my rear next week at this time. The first thing they done to us when we got off the train was load us in trucks and take us in the dispensary for cock inspection. Imagine that at that hour of the morning. The doctor was so damn sleepy, I don't think he could have seen anything if the fellows had had anything. Then they lined us all up in front of the dispensary and called off a lot of fellows names for the field artillery outfit. They put the rest of us in the infantry. Then they took us to our barracks.

We got the whole sum of three hours of sleep. After breakfast they lined us all up and took us over to a classification station. There they gave us another interview to see what kind of job we we're suited for. I was afraid I was stuck in the infantry but after my interview I still had hopes. The interviewer told me I still had a good chance of getting into the trucking part of the infantry.

After dinner they called us out again for another lecture. After the lecture they called off a bunch of names, mine included and told us that we were in the trucking division but we still have to take basic training but it won't last as long as those in the main infantry.

I sure hope you girls didn't get cold standing there to see us off. You sure gave me a swell send off. You held that little chin right up there just like a soldier yourself. That sure made me feel good honey.

Your Hubby



Ray's pocket map of Camp Roberts.

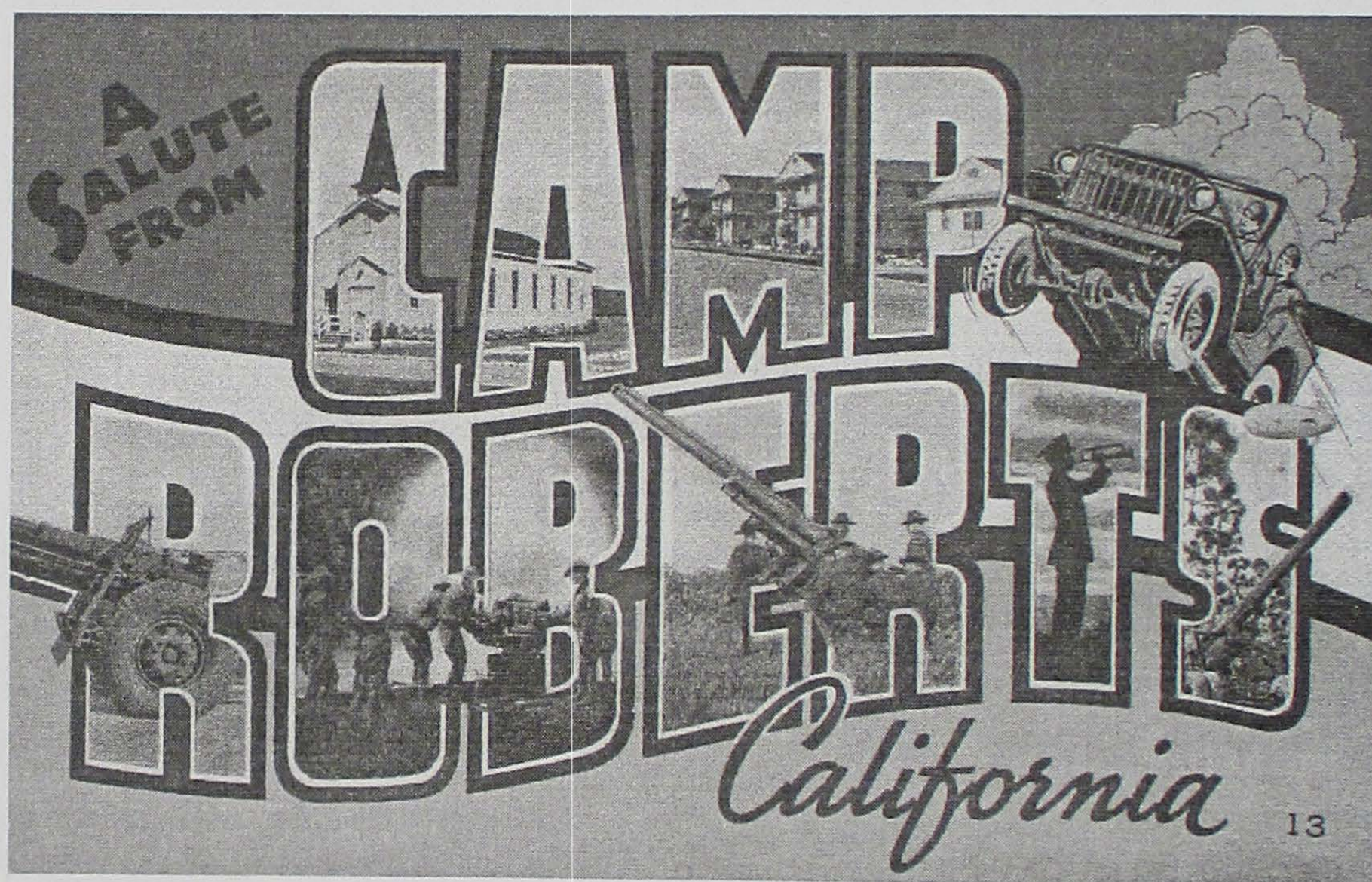
Camp Roberts
Sunday afternoon Mar 20, 1944

My Dearest Darling,

When they called us together this morning they gave us a lecture on maintaining our beds, barracks and clothing. They also issued us a small pack to carry on our backs for the first few hikes we have to make.

They gave us a lesson on how to pack our roll into this back pack. Then they made us pack our own. If anything was wrong we had to do it all over again. In this pack we put a tent, pick, shell belt, bayonet and case, a steel helmet, two blankets and our eating kits. The guys in this outfit sure goes in for playing poker, shooting dice and other gambling games I never saw or heard of. This is sure a big camp. They have about 18,000 soldiers here. They have three divisions, Infantry, Field Artillery, and Paratroopers primary school.

So long my Darling,
XXXXX
I love you Your Hubby



Postcard sent home by Ray.

Camp Roberts, Calif
Tues eve, Mar 21, 1944

Dearest Darling,

I feel like I have been put through the mill. They sure put us right down in the groove. They put us through a lot of exercise yesterday forenoon. Yesterday afternoon we had two hours of lectures. One of those lectures was on censorship so I won't be able to tell you a lot about what we are doing and about our training.

With love and kisses,
Your Hubby

Thursday night
Mar 24, 1944

Hello My Dearest Darling,

I have been on K.P. all day today and I am about ready to fall in my tracks. Yesterday when they were putting us through drill my right knee gave out. I had to fall out for awhile. Then they told me to try it again. I made out O.K. during the afternoon. If they keep the pace we are now going I am going to be down to my right size in a month. I bet they have taken off ten pounds already. My clothes are beginning to get a little large.

Goodnight Darling, I love you
XXXXXXXXX
Your Hubby

Mar 28, 1944

My Dearest Darling Sweetheart,

They sent me up to the hospital today to x-ray my knee. I am supposed to find out what they found out in the morning. It sure has been giving me trouble these last three days. Today I could hardly walk. I sure had one hell of a time trying to march. I have used almost a full bottle of liniment they gave me to put on it.

I love you,
your Hubby

Monday April 3, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Friday we had a hike during the day and G.I.'d the barracks until lights out Friday night. By G.I. that means scrub the floors and walls with soap and water with a scrub brush, cleaning rifles and dusting off everything. This all had to be done for an inspection on Saturday morning at 7:30 am. From 7:30 am to 9:00 am is inspection period. Everything has to be spotless. If the Lieutenant or Captain find a spot on anything you sure catch hell for it. They made us crawl 125 yards on our bellies this afternoon and I am sure all in tonight.

Your Hubby,
Nite, Nite, Honey

Sat Night April 8.

Hello Sweetie,

They tried to kill me off yesterday but I didn't let them get away with it today. The first job I had was sewing lawn seed. When I got done a Sergeant came and got me to work in the mess hall store room. I had to remove all the goods from the shelves and give them a good scrubbing and restock the shelves cleaning each can and jar. When I went to work the sarge told me to take my time and I sure did. I got done at 2:30 this afternoon. The fellows are still raving about the cookies you sent me sweetheart.

Your,
Daddy

Monday Eve, April 10

My Dearest Darling Wife,

They sure are lowering the gong on me. I drew that damnable K.P. shift again today. They sure work the hell right out of us guys on that job. From peeling spud by the tubful to scrubbing dishes sure is something.

Honey I lost another 4lbs last week. I think I am doing right well. We averaged the ages of the men yesterday and the average age of 64 men is 32 yrs old. They sure weren't a bunch of spring chickens. 7 of the men already have their false teeth.

I love you my darling,
your daddy.
Nite Nite Sleep tite.

Wed April 12

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We sure had a swell day out in the field today. They sure put us through the paces on the rifle. Maybe I will know how to shoot and hunt pheasants when I get my furlough honey. There is only one way to shoot a rifle and that's the Army way. It's either all right or all wrong. No ifs ands or maybes in the Army way. They are sure finding a lot of muscles in our bodies that we never knew we had and are they ever tender and sore.

So long,
your Daddy



ADVANCING TO NEW POSITION ACROSS CREEK — CAMP ROBERTS, CALIFORNIA

Postcard Ray sent home.

Sat April 15

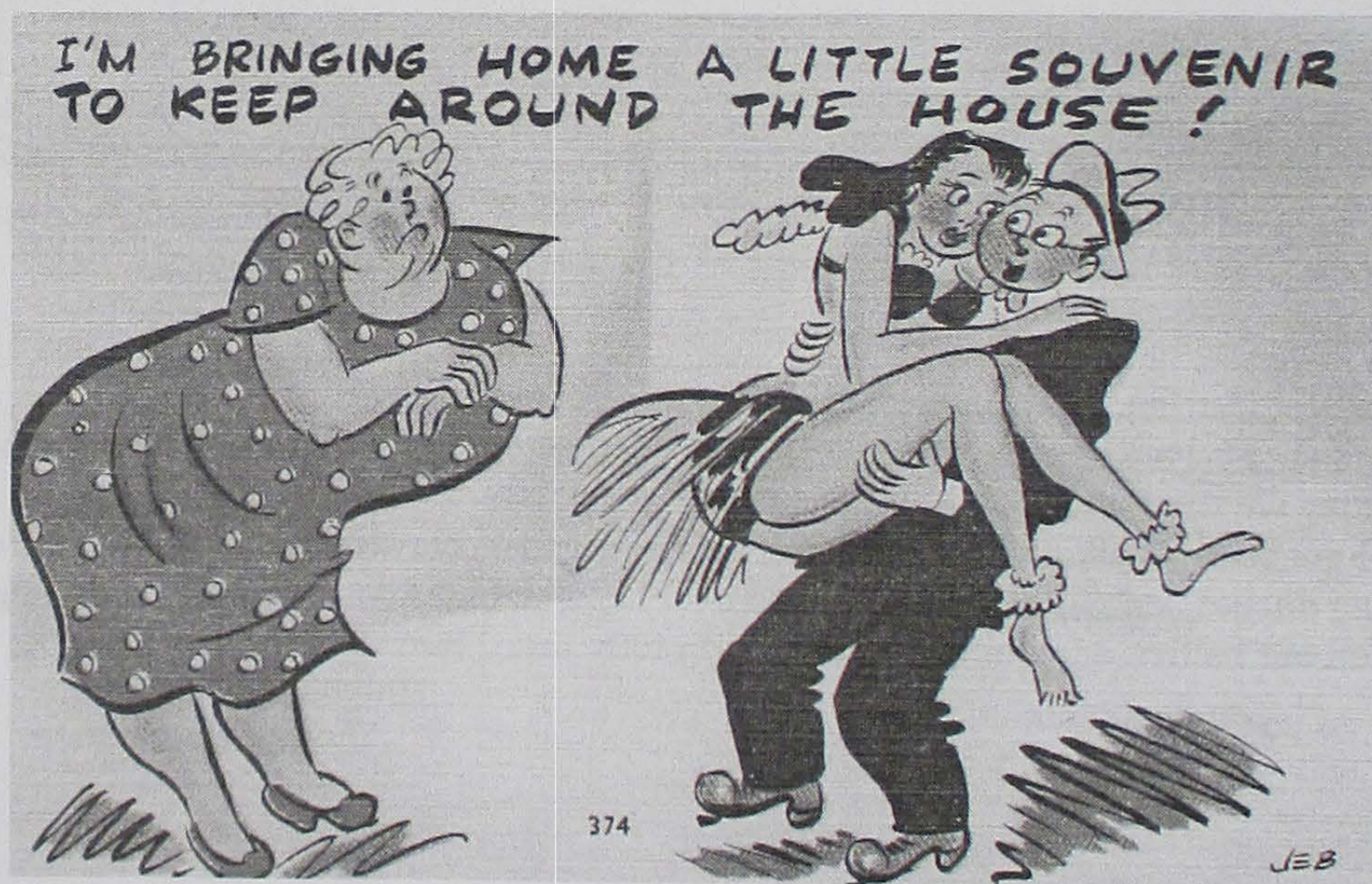
My Dearest Darling,

I sure been a busy guy this week from early morning till lights out every night. Yesterday we went on another obstacle course. I made the course but my leg was all in when I got done. Walking logs, crawling over barricades, crawling under barbed wire, jumping ditches, stabbing dummies, hand over hand across ravines and then crawling 200 yards on our bellies. My belly is wearing off pretty fast. I have lost another 3lbs.

Nite nite my Darling,
Your Daddy



Ray in combat uniform. Camp Roberts, California.



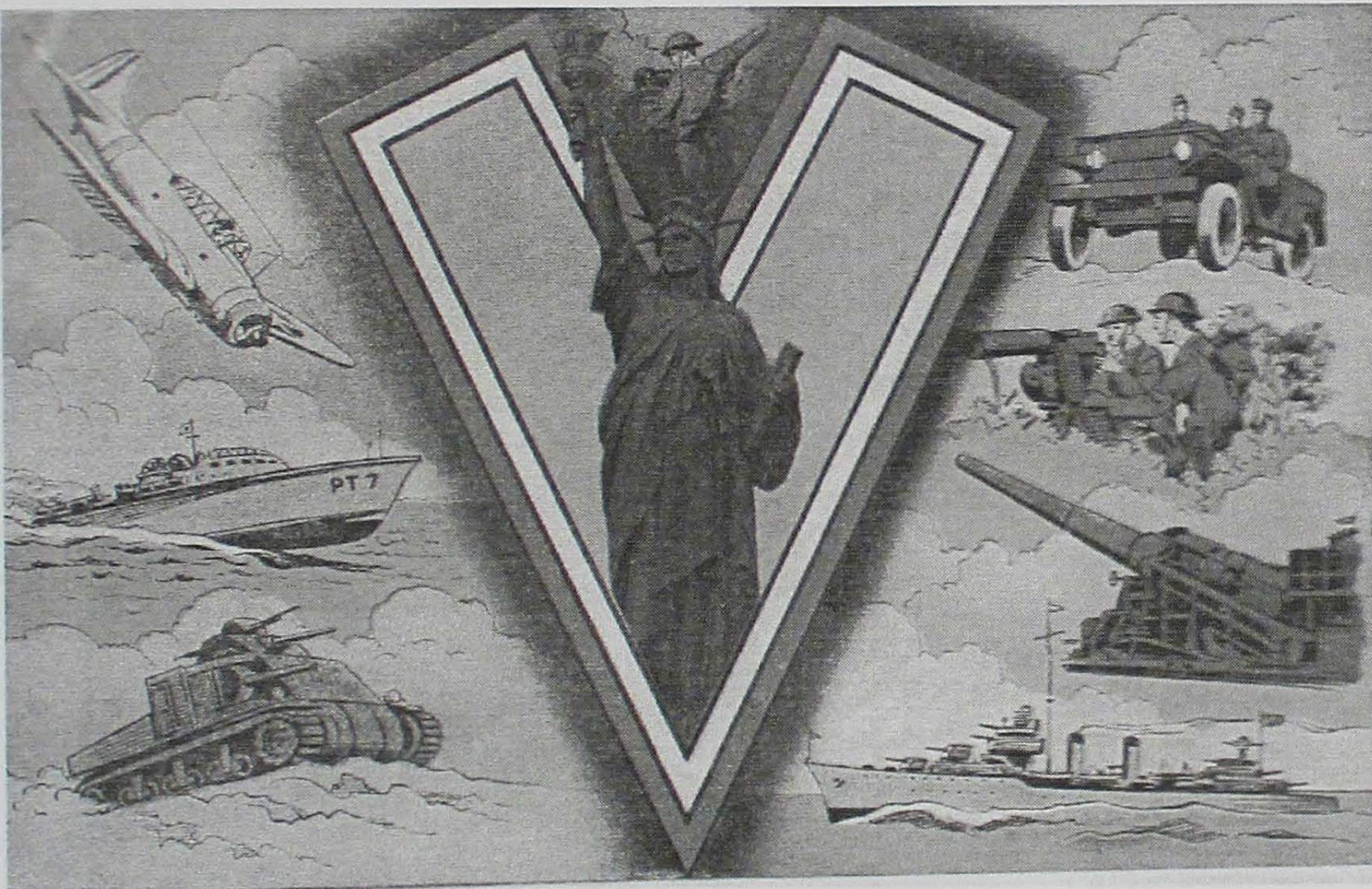
Camp Roberts Postcard.

Sunday April 16

My Dearest Darling,

I have been down to the PX to get some postcards for you honey. Some are comical and others are of the camp. I hope you get a bang out of em as I did. Boy we sure have a schedule for next week. 4:00am every morning till 7:00pm every night in the field. We are going to actually shoot rifles on the range. It's 3 ½ miles each way out to the range and back so we have a little hiking to do besides shooting our rifles. Next Friday and Saturday we shoot for marksmanship and score. I hope to make something out of it. They have a \$25.00 prize for the highest scorer. \$15.00 for 2nd & \$10.00 for 3rd. That is a nice prize to try for anyhow.

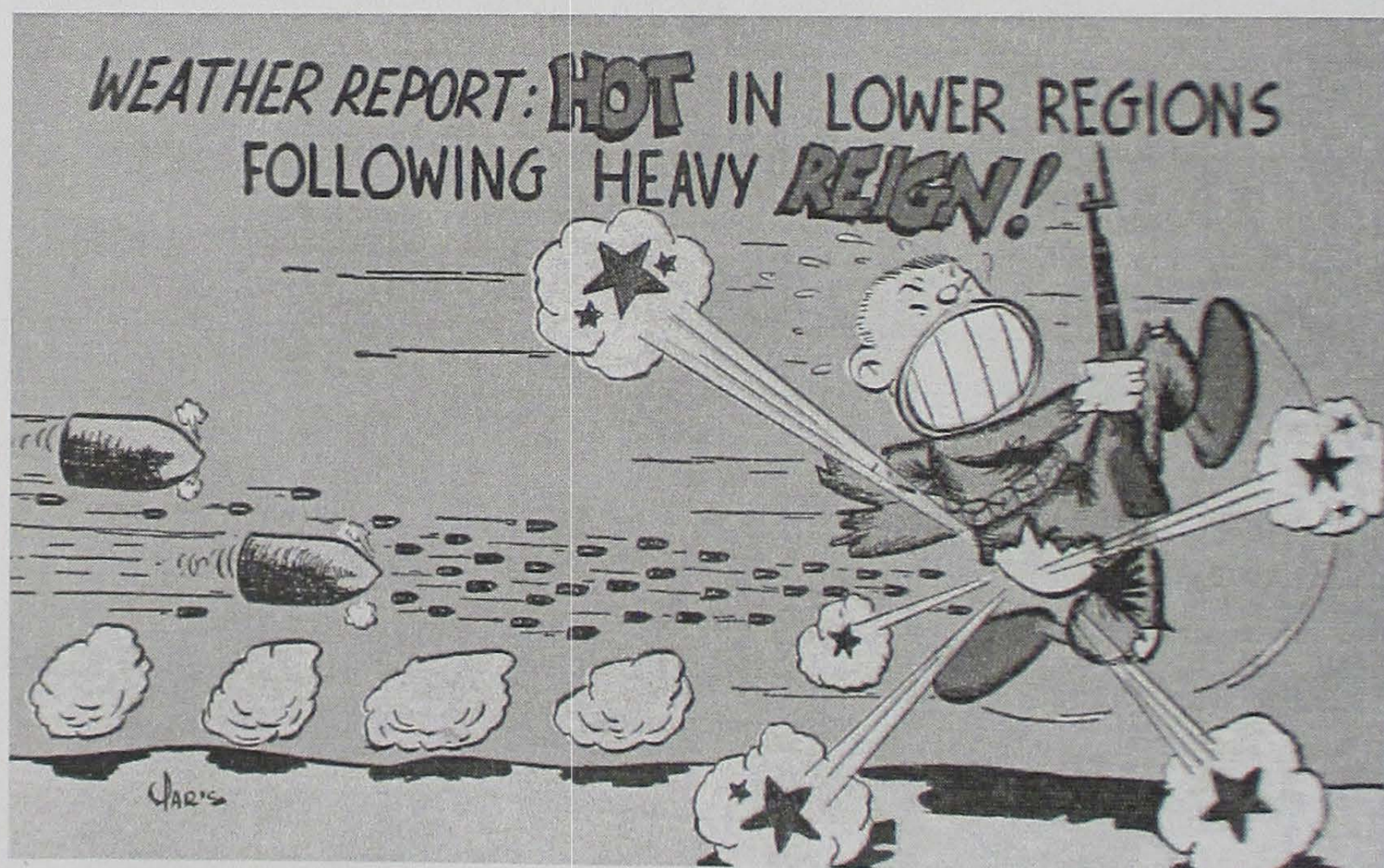
With love and kisses,
your Daddy
XXXXX



Postcard from Ray.



Postcards sent home by Ray.





Postcard from Ray.

Thurs April 20.

My Dearest Darling,

I had a hard day on the range. I sure think you wished me luck today honey because I made sharpshooter record shooting on the 500yd, 300yd, and 200yd targets. I got 171 score out of 210 total points. I feel pretty good about my record. On the way home from the march I had to fall out and the sergeant was with me and we found a soldier lying in the grass all doubled up, sick at his stomach, cold as ice. We got him up and carried him about 300yds to a guard shack. There we called an ambulance and then we had to wait $\frac{3}{4}$ an hour. By the time the ambulance got there he was so sick he couldn't hardly set up. The ambulance driver said if he had been left much longer he probably would have went into a coma and froze to death during the night because we were the last to come over the trail.

They took our names for what I don't know but I imagine the men in charge of his company are going to get taken over the coals and catch a lot of hell about it. The sergeant and I were 2 hours late for supper but the cook gave us a very good supper, breaded pork chops, potatoes, gravy, cottage cheese, cocoa and two big dishes of ice cream. I couldn't resist but I tried to hold myself down as much as possible. We have to pretend to do some phases of our training such as loading our rifles so now they tell us to pretend we get our sleep. Some of these nights we only get 3 or 4 hrs sleep.

Nite Nite Sweetheart
Your Daddy

Sunday April 23

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Boy did we ever get a grand surprise this noon for dinner. The 85th Inf.Tng.Bn invited 80 young ladies from Los Angeles and Santa Barbara in for a weekend visit to our camp. They got 'Rudy Vallee,' and his show troop orchestra to entertain at the camp entertainment house. They had 10 men from each barracks draw the girls names out of a hat to have at each table as a guest. The girl that was at our table was a very nice young lady. Her boyfriend is in the service and she has yet to make 4 more trips like this one to different camps in California. Her name was Miss Georgetta James, her home is in Santa Barbara. She asked all of us different questions about the Army and where we were from. We also had the best dinner we have had since I got in this place. T-Bone steaks, Pea and cheese salad, lettuce salad, celery, baked potatoes, steak sauce, bread and butter, pineapple juice, pumpkin pie and ice cream. What a dinner.

I love you honey,
XXXXXX

Tuesday April 25

My Dearest Darling,

4:30am we got up, 5:00 Breakfast, 6:30 we fell out for march to Antitank range. This took 1½ hours time to get there. After we got there we trained to shoot the bazooka at tank targets. When we got to fire the real bazooka it was really a thrill. We had dinner in the field, Boiled chicken, potatoes, cocoa and cake. Also bread and jelly. After dinner we got training on the rocket grenade shot from a rifle. I didn't care much for that. When you fired the rifle you picked yourself up about 4ft back from where you fired it and a damn sore shoulder. I shaved and cleaned my rifle before the lights went out and had to put it back together in the dark. That I.R.T.C you asked about means this, 'Infantry Replacement Training Center.' Darling, don't let that worry you because we all don't have to go as replacements especially if you have any physical ailments at all which they say will keep me on this side of the pond. I got that information from the 1st Luey. So if I don't get a discharge I'll stay in the good old U.S.A. This afternoon we had 2 hrs of lecture on control of malaria fever. They sure gave us the lowdown on that damn disease.

Nite Nite Dolly.

Wed April 26

My Dearest Darling,

Some news in one of the papers said that Macarthur doesn't want men from Camp Roberts because he said they are worked to death and have to have a rest period before going into combat. So I don't think that sounded very good for Camp Roberts.

Thurs April 27

My Dearest Darling,

This afternoon we were given instructions on how to assemble and maneuver a .50 cal machine gun. It took us all afternoon to tear it down and put it back together again. So many parts and pieces I never saw before in anything. We also had to learn the name of each piece and what its function was. One of our corporals in the barracks just came up and made each one of us take the sites off our rifles and clean them under his inspection. Some Joe downstairs was caught with a dirty site so we all had to tear ours down so he could inspect them. Your rifle comes before yourself in this mans Army.

When you come in out of the field, just after chow you clean your rifle before doing one damn thing else. The Army says we have 18 hours of work 2 hours to clean rifles and barracks and try to sleep for 4 hours if you can. Pretty soon we won't have time to sleep at the rate we are going. They did tell us we were to start learning how to turn the key on in a truck in a couple of weeks. I wonder if we will get to learn to drive by the time our 17 weeks is gone. Ha! Ha!

Saturday April 29, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Well Dolly we finished up another hard week yesterday. We fixed the machine guns yesterday morning at moving targets out on the range. It was about the most interesting gun I have run across yet in the Army. I am still waiting to get started on the trucks. Our training should start on them in a couple weeks. The new service club has a big main floor, balcony, cafeteria, lounges, sun porches and sure is well plenished with equipment such as chairs, tables, a piano, games, and reading material.

It is much more furnished than the club at Camp Dodge. I will sure be glad to take you there when you come out to see your daddy my baby doll. I am down to 237 lbs now. That means 34 lbs lost since Mar 8.

So long "My Darling Baby Dolly."



Postcard from Ray.

Thurs May 4, 1944

My Dearest Darling,

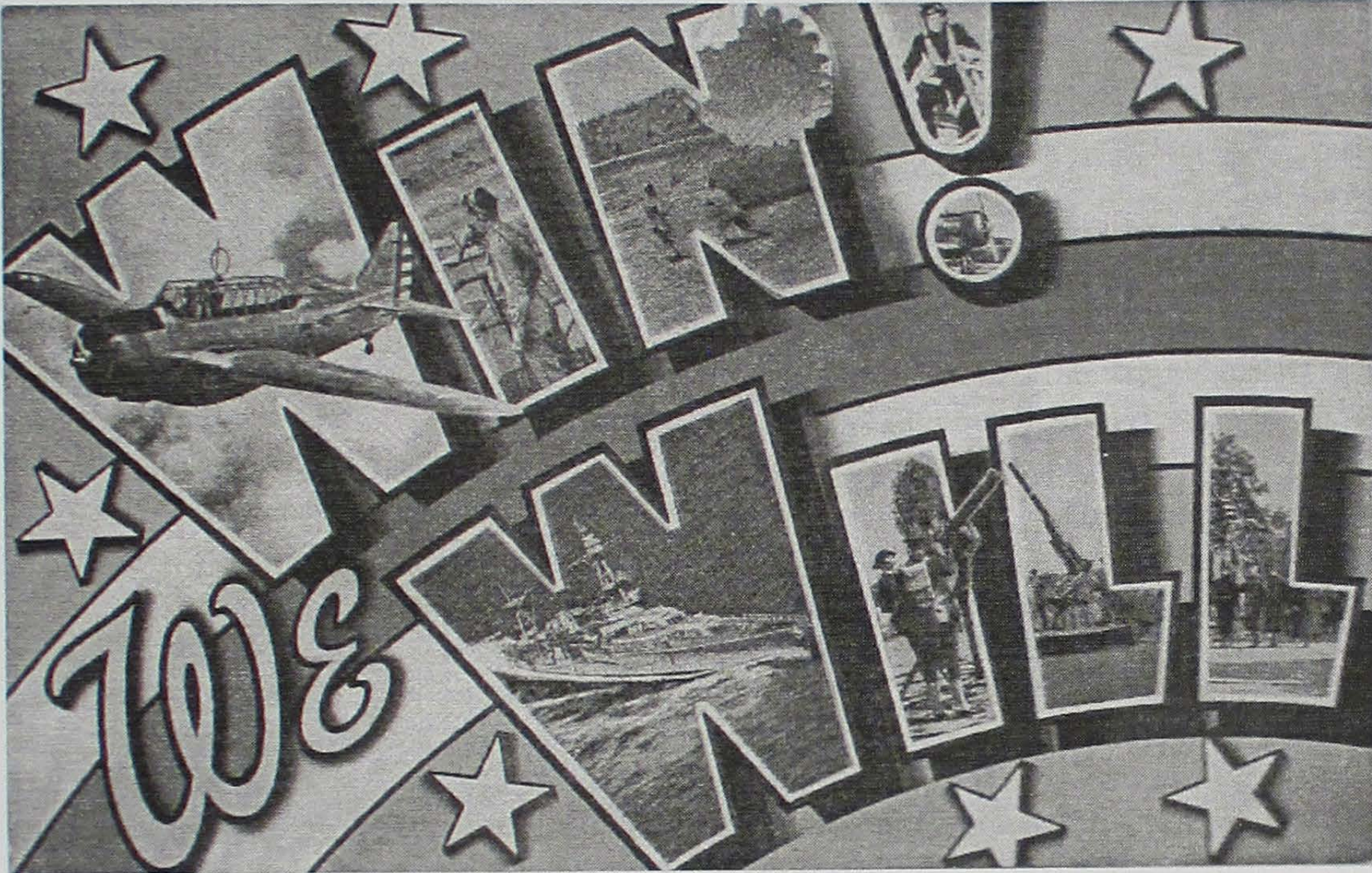
Dolly we got a surprise today. We got started on learning about trucks today. They sure ask some silly questions such as where is the steering wheel, and the foot brake and what foot you use on the brake pedal. Doesn't that sound kind of screwy to you? We spent the whole day on those tests so I am not quite so tired tonight.

I love you mommie,
Your Daddy

Sat May 6, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Honey, my darling beloved, thanks for the wonderful box. I received it today in fine shape. The cookies were simply delicious darling. They are about gone already. The O'Henry candy bar sure was grand. It really tasted grand honey. That is the first O'Henry candy bar I have seen and eaten since I left Iowa. I divide everything with my buddies sweetheart and they do the same with me. It sure is a mad rush when I get a box now honey. They all gang around to get a cookie, gum and candy. They all say to tell you "Thanks a lot and it sure was grand."



Postcard from Ray.

May 8, 1944

My Dearest Darling,

Well sweetheart we are starting to learn about trucks today. We were given instructions on what a screwdriver and a pair of pliers was used for this morning. Ha! Ha!

I love you
XXXXXXXXXX

Tuesday May 9, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We had quite a day today. We went about 30 miles up in the mountains and fired .50 caliber machine guns at radio controlled airplanes. It sure was interesting. They took us over and back in Army trucks. Thank goodness we didn't have to march it or we sure would be hiking yet. Ha! Ha!

Nite Nite Dolly

Wed May 10, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Well Pete your old daddy is feeling pretty good tonight. We went out on another range and shot at moving and stationary targets with our rifles again today. I had pretty good luck which helped me perk up again. Tomorrow we go out to fire on distant moving and flying targets and from what we hear it is going to be our last range test and then we settle down to technical training again.

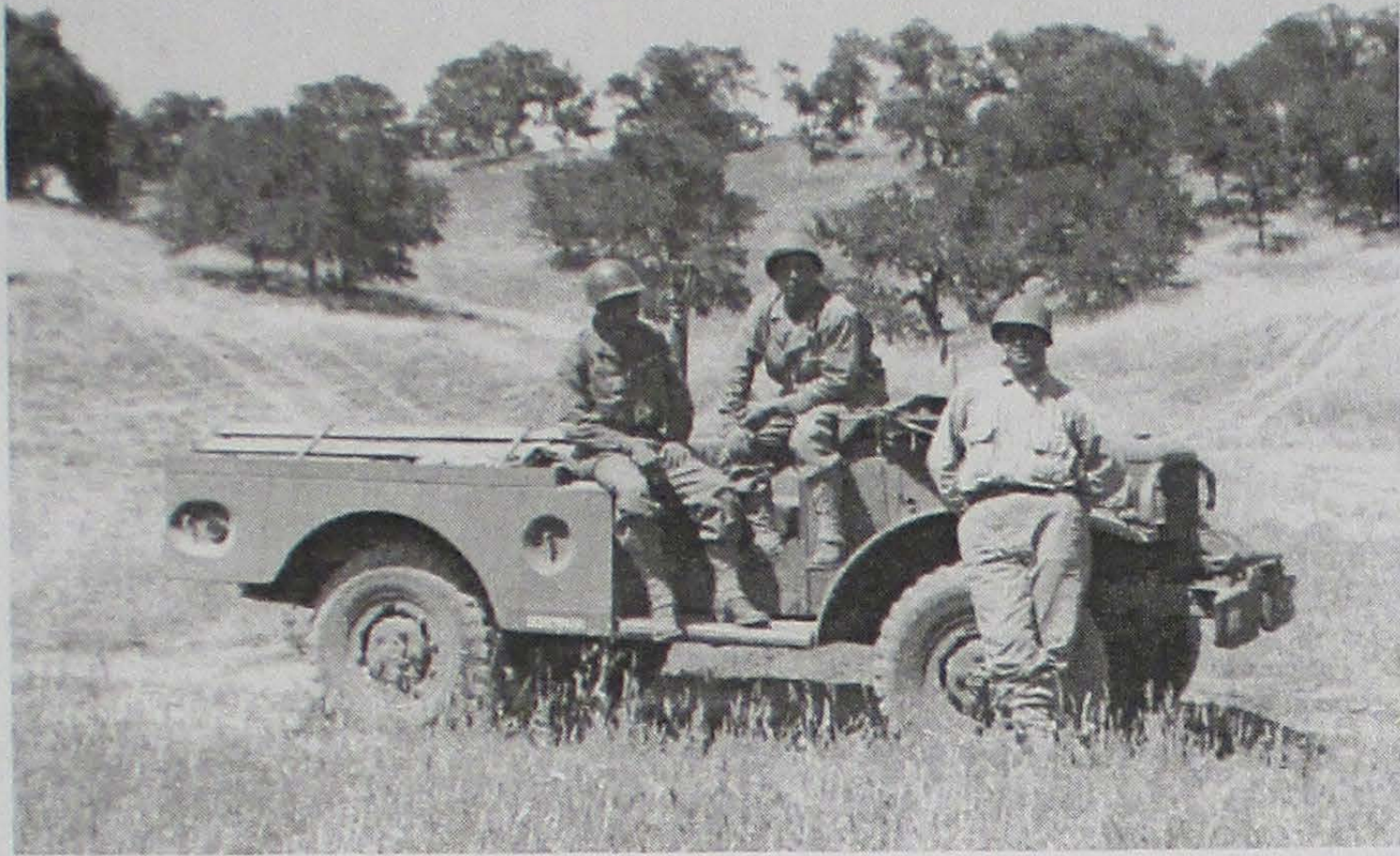
Nite Nite Mommy,
Daddy loves you.

May 12, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Well Pete we learned a little more about trucks today. We learned where the gas tank was and what to put in it. Ha! Ha! We also got a lecture on how the motor worked and what the oil gauge was for and how to read it. Boy we sure are learning fast. Ha! Ha!

Nite Nite Mommy with love and kisses.
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX



Ray (standing) with buddies at Camp Roberts.

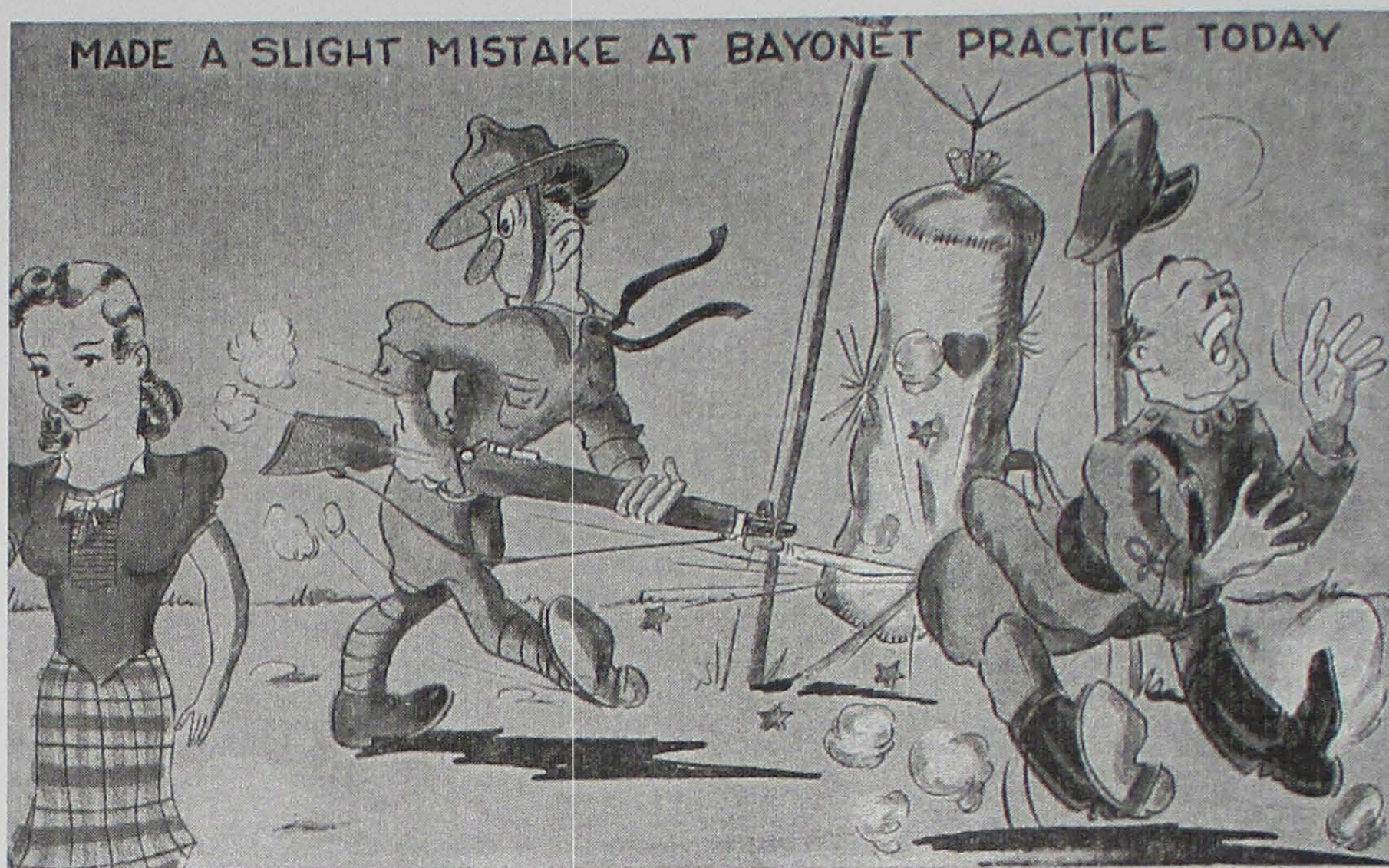
Thurs May 18, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We sure had some night problems last night. We marched about 3 miles from camp and pitched a camp. Then they split our outfit up into small units like in actual warfare. Our enemy was to be another outfit and we were going into their lines. While we were maneuvering around they shot off gas bombs and we had to use our gas masks. I got tear gas in my eyes the first time because I came out of a dugout right into it. My eyes sure watered but they didn't catch me off guard the next 3 times because I was very careful when I came out of my dugout to take a good whiff of air and if it had the slightest tint of a gas smell I hauled on the gas mask.

We sure had lots of excitement during the maneuvers. They shot off bombs and hand grenades and flares. You sure would have thought we actually had a war on out there. Our outfit captured 43 fellows from the other outfit. We sure had a lot of fun even though it was a lot of work. I hear that we are going to get some film in camp one of these days. I am sure going to try and get some so we can take some pictures when you get out here. We just had some excitement around the Battalion. We just had fire call which caught some of the fellows in the shower, some undressed and some shaving. You sure could have had a big laugh seeing guys running around in shorts trying to get to their assigned buildings. I laughed 'till I could hardly hold my sides and stand at attention. Sure was excitement while it lasted.

oodles of love and kisses for you sweetheart.



Postcards sent home by Ray.



Sunday May 21, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Friday I had to go back to the dental clinic and they pulled both of those teeth. The first one came out easy but they had to go in and knock the other one loose with a chisel and hammer. I was in the chair for an hour and fifteen minutes. I was all in when I got out of the chair and back to the barracks. I had to put ice packs on it until 10:00pm. It started to swell up yesterday and I sure am a pretty sight today.

I love you sweetheart,
XXXXXX
I'll be waiting for you honey.

Tuesday (Postmarked June 29)

My Dearest Darling,

We thought our training was tough but yesterday and today has beat anything yet that we have had. We spent all day running up and down these hills and digging foxholes and camouflaging everything including the crapping can. Henry and I were so damn tired last night that neither one of us knew which way was up or down. One of the fellows in our gang passed out from the heat. I thought I was going to but I didn't.

I love you 'Pete'
Your Daddy
XXXXXX

Tuesday (Postmarked July 1)

My Dearest Darling Wife,

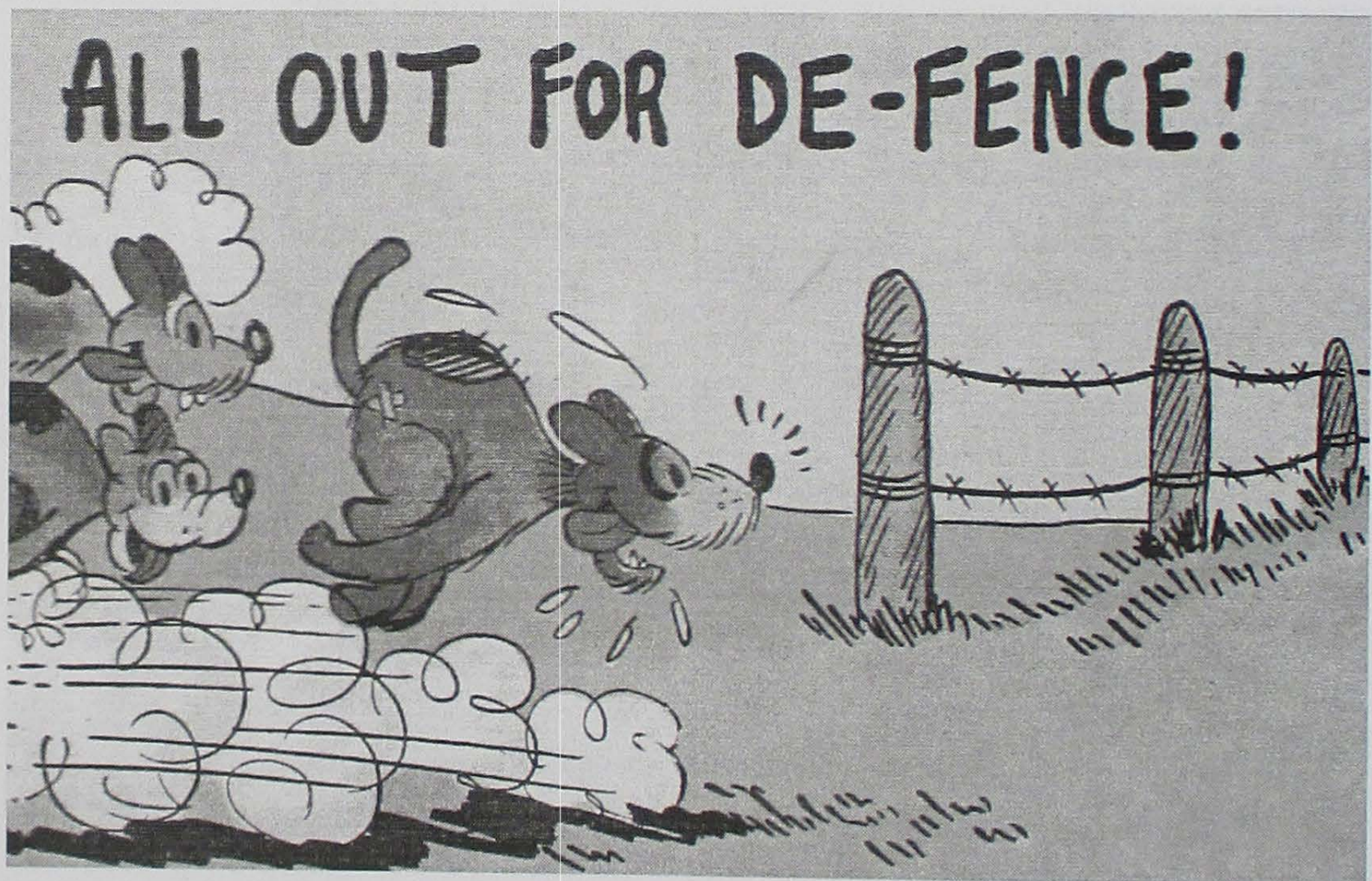
From yesterday morning until tonight we have been living on 'C' rations out of tin cans. They sure don't fill you up much. One can of hash and a can of coffee and beans is all there is to a meal. So you see we sure as hell aren't getting fat on them.

Nite Nite Sweetie
Your Hubby



OBSERVATION POST — CAMP ROBERTS, CALIFORNIA

Postcards Ray sent home.



Friday June 30

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We sure had a hell of a day again today. We walked up a valley and was shot at from all sides to see what our reaction was to gunfire. Then we roamed around through the mountains on a compass course and I was so tired tonight I can hardly wiggle. No rest for the wicked they say and I guess that's us.

Love and kisses for you honey.

July 5, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Boy we sure had a lot of excitement in camp this morning. They turned loose a lot of tear gas in camp while all of us were asleep. We all woke up and had to put on our gas mask. We sure had a time. Then we went back to sleep. They had a call to arms and we all had to get up and go on guard. They sure didn't give us much of a chance to sleep.

I love you sweetheart, Nite Nite

Your Hubby

XXXXXXX

Tuesday July 25

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Well dolly another long day is just about gone. We got all those damned rifles cleaned finally. Then we took off and hid out so we wouldn't get anymore details this afternoon. The sergeant said as long as we keep out of sight he sure as hell wouldn't bother to hunt for us unless he really wanted us and we sure hid.

Lots of love and kisses for you
my sweetheart. Your Hubby



Ray and his parents



Ray and sister Elsie Marie

While traveling from Camp Roberts, CA to Camp Chaffee, Ark, Ray visited family. Summer 1944.





Souvenir from Camp Chaffee.

Wed Oct 11, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I lost a major battle with the Lt. of our platoon. I had to get a god damn G.I. haircut. I am still mad as hell about it but that's all the good it does now that it is cut. It sure looks like "Hell" to if I should say so. I hope they are satisfied now. They wouldn't give us any peace till it was cut but if I can help it they are going to have to coral me for the next one.

I love you sweetheart
your Hubby

Thursday Oct 12

My Dearest darling Wife,

We are now wearing our O.D. uniform for good and they feel pretty darn good. We turned in all of our suntans. So we will have that much less to bother with.

Nite Nite Sweetheart
Sleep tight
your Hubby

New York, N.Y.
Monday Oct 23, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Honey, we seen all the sites. Zandell, Pixler and I had a swell time. Zandell hired a taxi to tour the town with and we really toured the city. First we went over to Chinatown down through the poor section and slum district over on the east dock side then up through wall street. (There we saw sights that were simply almost unbelievable, skyscrapers, tunnels, overhead railroads.) then we went up Broadway to Radio city but it was so jam packed with people that we couldn't get in. Then we went over to a big ice skating rink and watched some professional skaters skate and they really put on a swell show for us. Zandell also bought us our dinner and supper. The taxi fare, dinner, supper and skate show cost him a good \$25.00 to \$30.00 and he wouldn't let me pay for anything.

your loving hubby Ray

Somewhere in the Atlantic
Wed Nov 1

My Dearest Darling Wife,

This Damn boat is taking me further away from you every minute honey. Sweetheart I have your picture and my bible here in front of me. Friday night after I mailed the last package from Arkansas I didn't leave the Co. area, only when the Co. did. Saturday afternoon I was detailed to scrub the mess car. Saturday night we packed to leave Sunday. We finally got up at 3:00am and left at 6:00am, got on the East coast Wednesday afternoon. The train car we were in was so damn rough riding I couldn't begin to write a letter even to you darling. Zandell, Pixler and I sure wanted to get out again but they wouldn't let us go to N.Y. again. Tuesday morn we were alerted again and I couldn't write you till after we were on the boat.

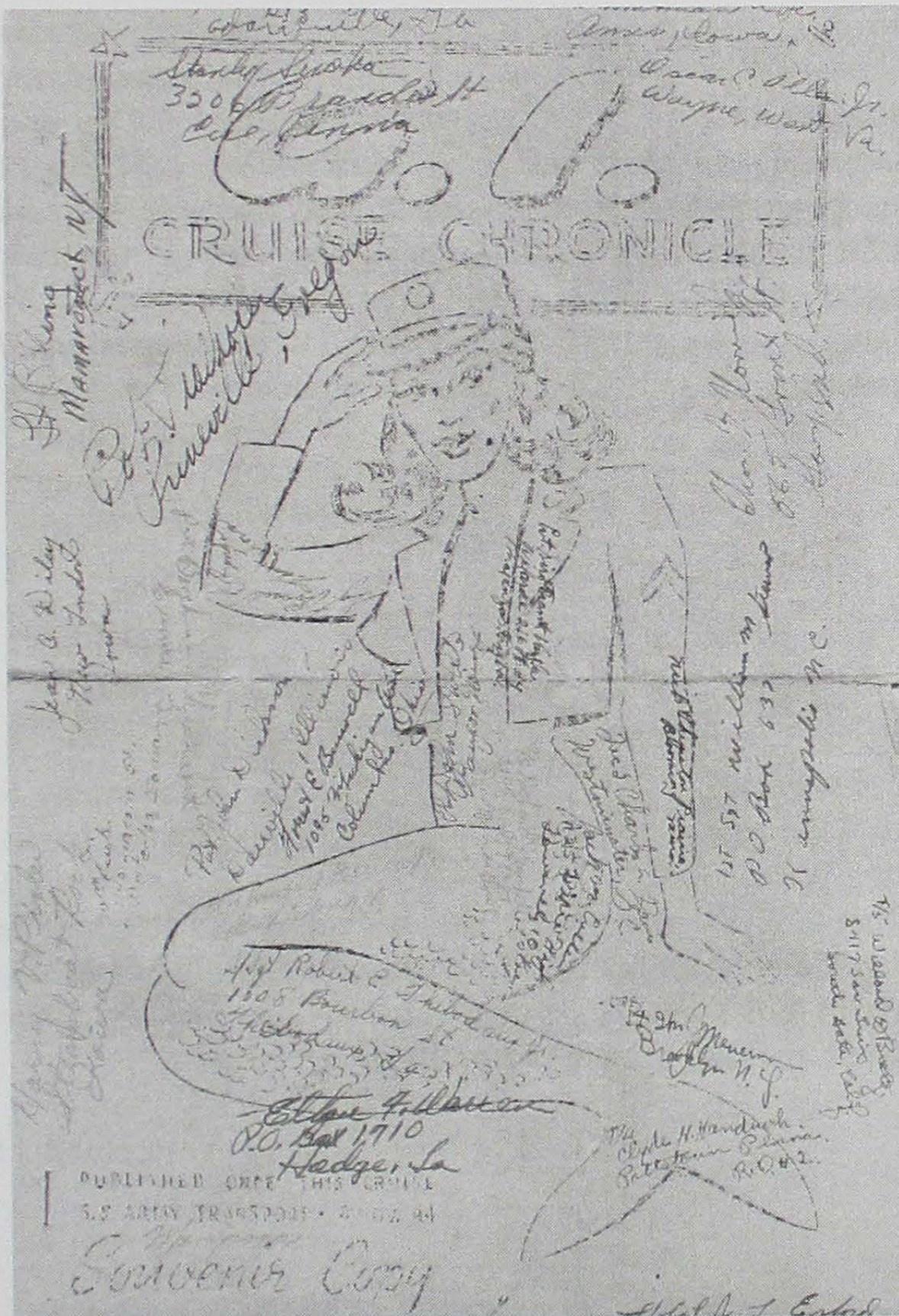
Bushels of love and kisses
Your Hubby, Ray

Still aboard boat

My Dearest Darling Wife,

The next day after I wrote the last letter to you honey, some so & so stole every damn bit of writing paper, candy, and peanuts I had. I was surprised they didn't take everything but they didn't. I am feeling fine darling. Everything is going Uncle Sam's way O.K. Even into this 9th day aboard this damn boat. This is a swell boat but I would much rather have never seen this damned ocean and stayed at home with you my precious darling. They handed these souvenirs out and some of the gang autographed it for me. I would like to have gotten more but we have to turn this mail in before 6:00pm and that is only about 10 minutes away.

Your loving hubby, Ray



Ray's copy of the paper from the S.S.Mariposa.

We left New York port of debarkation on Friday Oct 27, 1944 on the S.S. Mariposa and we landed at Marseilles, France on Nov 6, 1944. We were stationed outside of Marseilles from Nov 6, till Nov 28. Then we moved to Nice, France on Nov 29. We were in Nice overnite and we got orders for the 2nd Platoon to move to Pierra Cava up in the Alp Mountains 26 miles north of Nice.

While we were in Pierra Cava the 2nd Platoon was attached to the 442nd Infantry Regiment. They were really a wonderful outfit. They were such scrappers that the Germans really left us alone. The 442nd has the best record of any outfit yet. They never had a court-martial or A.W.O.L. while overseas.

Somewhere Southern France
Nov 9, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

This is sure a hell of a place over here. The way the people live is awful. The little kids run the streets begging the soldiers for candy and cigarettes. They don't seem to have any respect for themselves or anything else. If they have to shit they do it wherever they are at. They don't live like humans at all from what I've seen. The Red Cross gave us a little bag of articles as we got off the boat. It had writing paper, envelopes, soap, cigarettes, candy, sewing kit, miniature checker board, comic book and soap dish.

Your Hubby,
Ray

Somewhere Southern France
Sunday Noon, Nov 19, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Zandell went to town yesterday on pass and accidentally found this stationary. It isn't such a good grade of paper but it is the best he could find. We finally got a bottle of ink so I won't have to look someone up every time my pen goes dry. I sure am glad I got Dick Zandell as a tent partner, he sure is a swell guy.

Your Hubby, Ray

Monday Noon
Nov 20, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Well honey, maybe I better try and tell you a little about myself. We left camp on Oct 25. Boarded the boat and sailed on the 27th of Oct. We had quite a voyage. Our battalion pulled guard and K.P. all the way across, 4 hours on and 8 hours off. It sure was a monotonous trip. When we hit the straits of — it was quite interesting. Then we landed. It was quite a sight seeing all the activities in the port. I also saw some ships or rather the remains of ships that had been bombed or scuttled in the harbor. They were on their sides, tops of stacks sticking out of the water. Some were blown up on the rocks around the shore of the harbor.

Then after we left the boat we marched about 15 miles through town out to where we camped the first night, then we moved on out to the next place where we are now which is away from the danger zone honey. As we came through the town the little kids, young and old women asked us for candy, gum and cigarettes. We were told to hang on to our stuff because we would need it worse than they did in a short time but so far we have gotten pretty good PX service. The hardest thing is to get writing paper and envelopes. Candy, gum and cigarettes are scarce but we get some once a week.

So long sweetie,
your Ray

Somewhere Southern France
Tuesday Eve Nov 21, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

They had a nice show over here among the tents tonight. It was "The Fallen Sparrow," a detective show I know you would have enjoyed.

Somewhere Southern France
Friday Eve Nov 24

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Well honey yesterday was Roosevelt's Thanksgiving day for us G.I.s We sure had a swell dinner, turkey, dressing, potatoes, peas and carrots, mince meat pie, candy and nuts, cranberry sauce and coffee. We sure ate it up too. We were all so damn full of dinner we couldn't hardly do anything but we soon worked that off and were ready and waiting for chow at supper time.

I visited Marseilles, France. It sure is a war torn city. It was quite interesting but I have no desire to go on pass and go back there. There is no place for a decent soldier to go. Zandell and Fred Albert and I were there. We were so damn glad to get back to our pup tents. Boy, I don't know what I'd do if there wasn't some of the guys around me all the time that understand this French language. I sure as hell haven't been able to pick it up at all. I am not very anxious to learn it either.

Somewhere Southern France
Sunday Eve Dec 3, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I am having quite a time getting this started. Between the boys in the room here in the house and work today I haven't been able to start this letter before. Tonight the boys brought in some wine and they are beginning to feel pretty good and they are so damn comical, I can't help but laugh at them. The boys are Chaumont, Hackmann, Simon, Lindstrom and Posey. They are so full of devilment I can't hardly concentrate. We are quartered in a swell house with hot and cold running water. Plenty of heat to keep us warm and getting 3 meals a day. The grub is a little short but we are getting by with a little extra rations to them. We have got a very nice set up here.



A familiar site when the boys would get too much
Cognac in Pierra Cava.

Somewhere Southern France
Dec 4, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

The censorship is getting pretty damn strict as to what we can write. Melvin is still in the outfit but I don't know how he is getting along. I haven't seen him lately. Zandell, Pixler, and I are all together.

Somewhere Southern France
Dec 18, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We still have the same officers in our Company but Lt. Jones is a changed man. He has turned out to be a swell Joe since we moved into this house. He talks with us more, laughs and jokes with us, plays the piano and plays cards. In other words he raises his share of fun and hell and devilment right along with the rest of us. Some of the other officers are the same as you remember at Chaffee. We haven't had any lights or water in our house for five days until today they came through. Well sweetheart from the looks of things we might not have such a bad X-mas after all. We all got our heads together and are saving the candy and gum from our ration and we are planning a little X-mas party for the French kids around here. They haven't had a X-mas for 5 or 6 years. Some of the little kids don't know what X-mas even is. It sure is a shame the way these little kids have to live and do over here.

Somewhere Southern France
Dec 25, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Well sweetie we have had quite a X-mas day over here. We took three trucks and went around to three neighboring villages and picked up French kiddies and brought them to our house and had a big X-mas dinner for them. After dinner we had a young Frenchman dress up like Santa Claus and give them each a small package. The packages had a funny book, 4 chocolate bars and 2 sticks of gum. We saved the candy from our rations and it cost us each about .25 cents for the gift. We sure had a good time with them and they sure did enjoy it. The older folks were smiles from ear to ear and they were about as tickled as the kids were. I drove one of the trucks and the people sure did chatter to me. I knew they were talking about me and telling me how much they thought of it but I couldn't understand a damn word of it.

Somewhere Southern France
Dec 27, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We sure made a lot of kids happy also a lot of old folks too. When we took the kids home their parents and old folks were standing in doors and windows waving to us and had smiles from ear to ear. They also came over and shook my hand and jabbered 90 miles an hour. Then the school teacher in charge of the kids came over and talked to me in English and told me thanks from everyone.



Dec 25, 1944 Schoolteacher, and the kids I hauled to our Xmas party and took them home.
That is Southern standing by the teacher and grinning like a chisycat. Ha Ha.

Somewhere Southern France
Dec 31, 1944

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Well Darling I got quite a shock last night. They sent up a bulletin from headquarters and on the bulletin they had a list of names of fellows promoted from buck private to private first class and of all the names on the list was mine. Can you imagine that.

I still couldn't believe it till today when Jones told me I had better get my mosquito wings sewed on. Ha Ha! I looked high and low for something to send home to you and both our mothers but so far haven't found a damn thing worth sending home. It seems as though the Jerries got everything that was worth having.

Melvin is in the headquarters group so I don't get to see him very often. He drives the chow and supply truck. I just got through shaving, taking a sponge bath and getting my haircut. I feel better now. I also washed two sets of fatigues. They were so full of grease and dirt they stood up by themselves in the corner.



Thib, Doc and I in the Alp Mts. Pierra Cava, France

Somewhere Southern France
Jan 12, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I am still driving and getting along fine. We had a vehicle inspection the other day and I got several compliments on my truck. I also got another job passed on to me. I am the dispatcher for the trucks in my platoon.

Your loving Hubby,
Ray



Me, test firing the .30 caliber machine gun in the Alp Mts. January 1945.

Somewhere Southern France
Jan 15, 1945

I had a little tough luck yesterday morning but nothing serious. All it done to my truck was bend the bumper. The jeep I slid into got bent up a little bit but nothing serious and thank god no one was hurt at all, not even a scratch.



'A' Company drivers.

Somewhere Southern France
Jan 19, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Wednesday morning our squad drew a 48 hour pass to go to Nice on. So we went down there. It was the first pass I had since we moved into the house we live in. I sure did enjoy myself. I went down to the Red Cross center by the beach and spent the whole afternoon there. I sure saw a lot of different types of people. Young folks, old, kids and the poor classes. The mothers bring their babies down there to play in the sun. There sure was one cute little tike down there. I couldn't help watch it and play with it for awhile. I had a piece of candy to give to the baby and the child's mother gave me a picture of the cute little girl. I wanted to get the babies name but I couldn't understand a word she tried to tell me. I could make out that the baby was 10 months old but that's all.

Then that night Zandell and four others of our gang besides myself went to several French nightclubs and bars. Believe me darling, the stuff they have to drink over here is putrid stuff. I took three shots of cognac and that was all I could take. I couldn't even get a buzz out of it, Ha, Ha! Some of the fellows danced a round or two. They all wanted to have some fun so I danced three dances. I had some fun out on the floor being it's been so long since you and I went to any dances. We all went to the hotel at 12:30am. The next morning we slept until 9:30am. We missed our breakfast and so we went to the Red Cross lounge and had coffee and cookies about 10:30. The hotel where we stayed is run by the Army so we had good clean rooms and good chow. Yesterday for dinner we had some genuine steaks, can you imagine that, and they were sure darn good too. Yesterday afternoon Chaumont, Lindstrom, and myself went shopping. I bought a couple souvenirs.



Posey, Zandell, Taylor
Chaumont & Lindstrom.



On the Promenade in Nice with Jim Curtiss



Me in front of the Red Cross club in Nice Feb.45

Somewhere Southern France
Feb 16, 1945

I got a bump on the side of my head today. I was working on my truck and the wrench slipped and I got a goose egg on the side of my head. The air was blue for quite a while before the fog lifted. I saw Mayberry today. He is feeling pretty well. I am at the HQ getting my truck checked over.

So long sweetie,
Your loving Ray

"My Little French Girl."

I was on pass in Nice, France when I first saw Josianne and Madeline. They were down to the promenade across the street from the American Red Cross Center. I was sitting on the promenade watching the people go by when my eyes spotted Josianne. She was so cute and playful I couldn't help myself from watching her and finally I went over and played with her.

I couldn't understand a word Madeline said but Berchmann Chaumont (one of my buddies) could talk and understand French interpreted for me. Madeline gave me Josianne's picture and also invited me to their house to meet Serge. On the following Sunday I drove the boys to Nice on pass. I got to meet Serge, Madeline and Josianne while they were out for a Sunday afternoon stroll in the sun. They were sure swell to me while we were stationed up at Pierra Cava. Every time when I went on pass to Nice I always had a standing invitation to come and stay in their home. Serge, Madeline and Josianne were always happy to see me when I went there. Once in a while I took them some of my "C" or "K" rations and Madeline sure made good meals out of them. Also when I went there Serge & Madeline would take me to shows, operas, and we also took in a couple of French dances. They were sure a swell family and Josianne was sure a swell little doll too. I sure wish I could have put her in my duffle bag and brought her home with me.



Madeline, Josianne & I on the promenade. The sun was sure nice and bright is the reason for the look on my face.

Somewhere Southern France
Feb 21, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I am back up to our platoon home again and back in my own bunk again too. I sure had a time yesterday. I went on pass from the Company HQ while they were getting some parts for my truck. When I was coming back the MPs stopped me and asked for my pass. When I handed him my pass the first thing he asked me was who gave it to me and I said the Captain and when he told me it wasn't worth a damn you can imagine how I felt. Then I had to wait 2 hours on a corner with him to be taken to the MP headquarters. When I got there here were two more guys from my outfit in the same boat as I was.

When he seen my pass in the HQ, he seen I was from the same outfit and they loaded us up in a jeep and took us toward the edge of town to catch a ride back to our HQ. It all turned out O.K. because it wasn't our fault; they just didn't send the notice out in time to stop all passes while they held a 48 hour AWOL round up of soldiers with no pass at all.

Somewhere Southern France
Feb 22, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Mayberry is up here with us for a few days. He is driving truck steady now so he doesn't cook anymore. He hasn't heard from Beaula for quite awhile so I imagine he will be getting the big news one of these days.



This monument was at the road junction in the village of Moulinet, France where 6 of the boys went on a mission and on the return trip was in an ambush and we lost our first men.



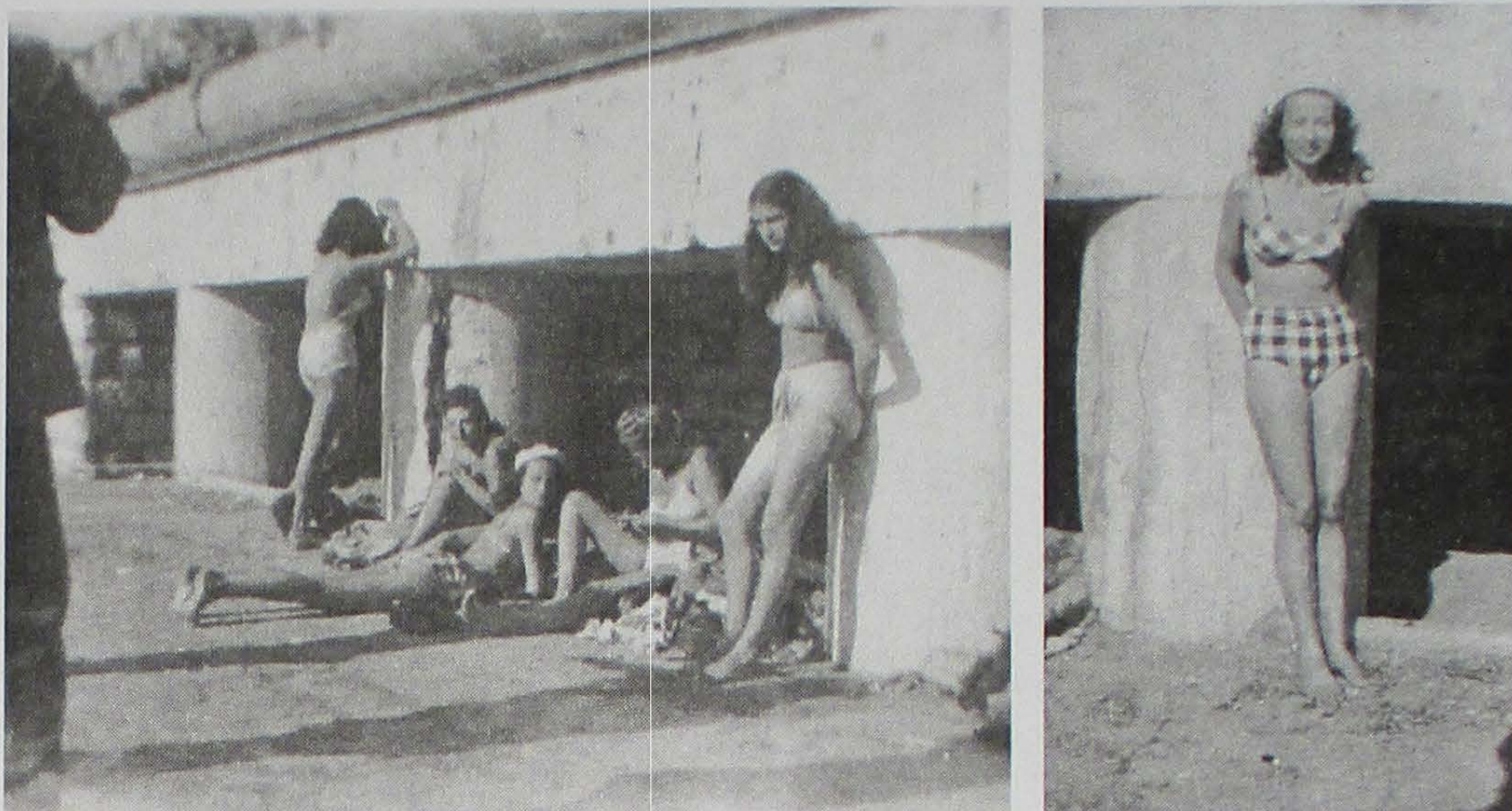
Back row l to r: Geo Franko, Hungate, Sarafine, and Jean Wiley
 Front row: Joe Gauthier, John Smith, Harold Courtney, Foutch, and Francis Cooper.
 This picture was taken at bridge site in memory of Geo. Bernay.

Somewhere Southern France
 March 1, 1945

Darling,

Night before last I was on guard and last night I drove the fellows in to the Red Cross dance. It sure helps my spirits a lot to take the fellows and let them have some fun during the evenings. They can drink, dance, and have a whole lot of fun so in return it makes me a lot happier too. While the fellows were at the dance I went to Serge's house and visited with them for awhile. Serge told me about the occupation and how the Germans were. They sure treat me swell and they insist I stay with them when I am in Nice.

Love and Kisses,
 Ray



French bathing beauties under the promenade. Nice, France Feb 3, 1945



"Lindy" taking a ride in French taxi. Nice, France Feb 1945.

Somewhere Southern France
March 4, 1945

My Dearest Darling,

Darling, I got to go to church again today. We got a protestant chaplain back again and all of the fellows went today. I went to church a while ago but the outfit the chaplain was with left and so we haven't had a Protestant chaplain again until today.

Somewhere Southern France
March 5, 1945

My Darling Wife,

I am writing you during my supper. I had a fairly good one tonight. Steak, Spaghetti and fruit cocktail for desert. Boy o' Boy the news sure did sound good to me last night. The army on the western front has got the Jerries on the run again. I sure hope they don't stop till they meet the Russians.

Somewhere Southern France
March 12, 1945

Darling,

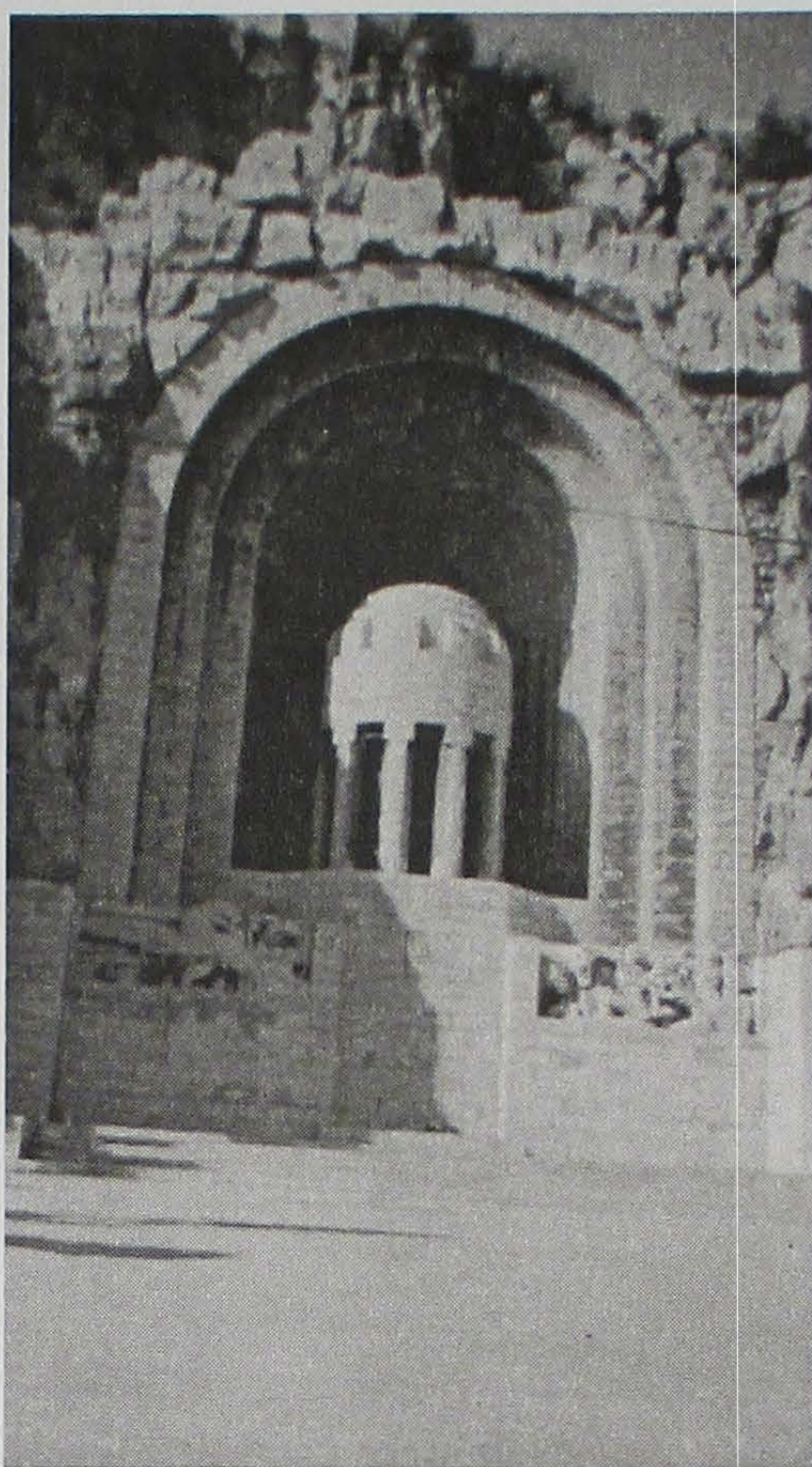
I am trying out Posey's new pen he just got in the mail. He is one of my roommates. He just came back from pass to Paris. He got me a couple of souvenirs.

Germany March 28, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

As you can see by the heading of my letter we have moved from where we were. I sure wish we were back there because Nice sure was a swell place to go on pass. We left in such a hell of a hurry that I didn't even get to tell Serge, Madeline and Josianne good bye. I hated it like the dickens because they sure treated me swell. I haven't gotten any mail now for two weeks or more. Oh yes, sweetheart, you ask why I haven't said much about Dick Zandell. Well, Dick had a bit of tough luck. He got hurt about three weeks or so ago and has been laid up but he'll be back with us in a little while if everything goes alright. He hit a landmine and got tore up by the shrapnel from it. Thank goodness he was the only one hurt because there were four men with him.

Your Sweetie,
Ray



When we left southern France and went north into Germany we got our orders to move from Pierra Cava on March 15, 1945 to Monaco, France where we formed into a large convoy. The convoy was started on the morning of March 17, 1945 from the entrance to the museum pictured.



French Cathedral in Luceran, France built in 1500 AD. The vines about the entrance is all barbed wire loaded with mines and booby traps.

Germany April 2, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Boy I sure don't see how these darn Jerries can hold out the way they are but they can't hold out forever the way the war news sounded the last time I heard it. Patton was on the move so damn fast his supply lines couldn't keep up with him. They even found Jerries behind them. I sure have been rolling more and more miles on the truck. Some day maybe I'll be trucking down the streets of Berlin Ha, Ha! I'm afraid the Russians will be on this side of there before we get there.



"Old Wilma" and I

Germany April 3, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

None of the fellows with me are getting mail so we are all in the same boat. Boy 'O Boy this is sure one hell of a country. You can't hardly believe your eyes. I am sure grateful that you, sweetheart and all the rest of the folks don't have to see these damnable things. If they were to ever rule anything it would be hell on wheels.

Germany April 4, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

The war news was sounding very good tonight. The 3rd Army is 160 miles from Berlin so they are creeping up on them. If they don't give up pretty soon this whole damn place will be blown to bits and it sure won't make me feel a damn bit bad to see it blown to hell either.

Germany April 12, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Hardly a week goes by without one or two flats. The roads over here are sure hell on tires and trucks. I sure do hope and pray that you and the folks never see or ever half to go through the hell that the people in the places I have been through have.

Germany April 13, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

One of my buddies got a letter from Dick Zandell the day before yesterday and he is getting along fine but he said it would probably be two months before he got to be back with us. He is in a rest camp to recuperate. Pixler got hurt the other day from a fall. Haven't heard how he is.

April 15, 1945

Darling,

You have been on my mind all day. I even got caught by Herb Kerr talking to you by myself. He said that I sure must be in love with my wife and I sure told him that I was. Herb is one of my buddies too and since Dick and Pixler are both laid up he and I are together a lot when we are working near each other and after dark we sit and chew the fat until we hit the hay.

We got paid yesterday in some new money. German style currency it's new invasion money. I am going to send a piece of it in this letter. It is in Marks and one Mark is worth .10 cents in our money. Well honey, I am going to the show tonight. Can you imagine that? It's the first time since we left down by Nice.

Your loving hubby,
Ray

Germany April 19, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Honey, I am sorry I haven't answered your questions but a lot of them I can't answer because of the censor. I have had my supper now such as it was, Corned Beef Hash, String Beans, Pineapple, Bread and Coffee. Not too bad considering the other rations we have to eat now and then.

April 20, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Thank god, honey, that you folks back home don't see the sights I have seen over here and that isn't all. I never want you to ever see them. Darling, the people over here sure aren't going to have much left if this war doesn't end soon. But I sure don't feel a bit sorry for them. Some of the fellows saw the 'Stars and Stripes', with F.D. Roosevelt's death but I didn't get to. I sure was shocked to hear about him dying but I guess when your time comes they go. I sure hope that Pres. Truman does as good a job as Roosevelt.

April 21, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Two of the fellows in our platoon have found a guitar a piece and they really are having quite a time playing and singing. I have been in the room with them and singing some of the songs you and I used to sing sweetheart. They sure brought back a lot of memories and quite a few tears too.

When your mail comes I'll get a lot of 'Sugar Reports', as the fellows here have started calling letters from wives or sweethearts.

Germany April 29, 1945

My Dearest Darling,

I haven't had any mail since Friday when I got 'Boo Koo', mail, meaning lots of mail. That's a German expression some of the fellows and myself picked up since we moved into Germany. We got a big bunch of nice juicy oranges in today's food ration and they are delicious.

Germany May 2, 1945

My Dearest Darling,

My squad leaders and my assistant drivers' wives and girlfriends' names are on my truck now. I also have 'Iowa', on the radiator of my truck. The money we are getting now isn't hardly worth having because we can only spend it on PX rations and postage stamps. We aren't allowed to associate with German civilians because that is fraternizing and further more I don't give a damn if I never associate with them.

Germany
May 4, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We were driving down the street the other day and saw a crowd of people in front of a place and one of the fellows got off the truck to see what the gathering was and came back with 50 lbs of Limburger cheese and wow, what a smell. Abney just took a big bite of it and blew his breath at me and the smell just about took my breath away. Whew! What a smell. Oh yes, we also went by a big building where they were bringing out wine and Abney went in to see the place and before he got out of the place he was knee deep in red wine. Ha, ha, what a sight. Some of the fellows got pretty tuned up on the wine.



Krauts lined up to get groceries in the store.
This is a common site in all the streets in Munich.



Sgt. Stewart, M. Sgt. Redd and Lt. Eckberg taking
a buzz around Munich in Stewart's 'Special Car'.

Germany
May 5, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I'll bet Darrell and the boys really had a celebration down there where he is at because according to the news, the Germans all surrendered the day before yesterday in Italy to the British 8th Army. So it's all over with down there.

Germany
May 14, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I got some news for you tonight. I can tell you I am in Munich. We were in Berchtesgaden a while back. That was sure some place. It was a beautiful place to see. It's a place millions of people dream about but never get to see. It is a mountain village up in the Alps. The valleys are all green and the snow capped mountains sure were beautiful. I am going to sign off for tonight and take some of the fellows and go see a movie here in town.

Your loving hubby,
Ray

Germany
May 17, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Honey, we have a new censor. Lt. Eckberg is our new platoon leader. Lt. Jones is back with our Co. Headquarters. He was in the hospital and now he is back in the company again.



Lt. Eckberg and Staff Sgt. Thibodaux in Sgt. Stewart's Kraut Car.
Munich, Germany.

Munich, Germany
May 18, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Well Darling, things are getting a little better everyday now. The other day they said we could tell where we were and today they said our mail would only be censored by the base censor instead of our Platoon leader. As yet we are still with General Dovers attached to the 7th Army. I only hope we stay that way if we stay over here because I don't want the Pacific or any part of it. Honey, Dick Zandell came back to the outfit today and it sure does seem darn good to have him back. His leg he says is O.K. but it gets pretty tired when he does a lot of walking. Pixler is still in the hospital someplace. I don't know where. I guess he will be on his way home and won't come back to us because his leg was broke and he was hurt elsewhere too.

Munich, Germany
May 20, 1945

My Dearest Darling,

I got to go to church and it sure did me a lot of good and I sure was glad to go. The chaplain sure gave us a swell sermon too. They sure are putting the clamps on these G.I.s that are getting caught fraternizing with the German gals. It is going to get tougher if these guys don't quit messing around. It makes me sick inside to see the way some of these married men carry on with these women but they who play with fire usually get burnt. How are the folks back home taking the victory over Germany? Still celebrating I suppose. Ha, Ha.

Well the rest of the guys in the Platoon done a pretty good job of celebrating too. I was so darn busy on the road that all the celebrating I done was to shoot all the ammunition in my rifle. Then I had to really clean the damn thing. Ha, Ha. I sure do hope they make up their minds about this sending the boys home. The rumors are flying so damn fast and furious, I don't know which end I am standing on. Oh yes, darling, we went to a show tonight but they closed it before it was over. Claudette Colbert & Fred McMurray in 'Practically Yours'. A darn good show but something went wrong in the theatre so we had to leave, darn it.



Thib and Lt.Eckberg in the Platoon jeep leading our convoy back to Munich from Berchtesgaden. May 10, 1945.

Munich, Germany
May 21, 1945

My Dearest Darling,

I sure can't figure out what the devil Wilma Heiser was trying to tell you about Howard and his stripes and patch. We were issued our 7th Army patch and told to sew them rite on. They only gave us two so you see honey, I just didn't have the jacket or coat on that had them when my picture was taken.

Munich, Germany
May 22, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I took the boys to the show tonight in the truck. I saw it too, but it made me so darn lonesome and blue for you sweetheart. I just couldn't help but cry for you honey. The name of the show was 'Dangerous Passage'. It was a mystery show and it was darn good too.

Munich, Germany
May 24, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I went to the show again with the boys. It was 'Between two women', with Dr. Gillespie. I sure will be darn glad when they tell us what the hell we are going to do. Whether its occupation, home or the Pacific. I hope and pray its home. I hope to find out something soon. We were in the 6th Army group attached to the 7th Army, then they put us in the 12th Army group as of now.



Thib & Joe Gauthier in a small German village that we entered on April 13, 1945.



Russians and Poles on their way home after being liberated by Americans. They took the tractor and trailers from the Germans. April 45.

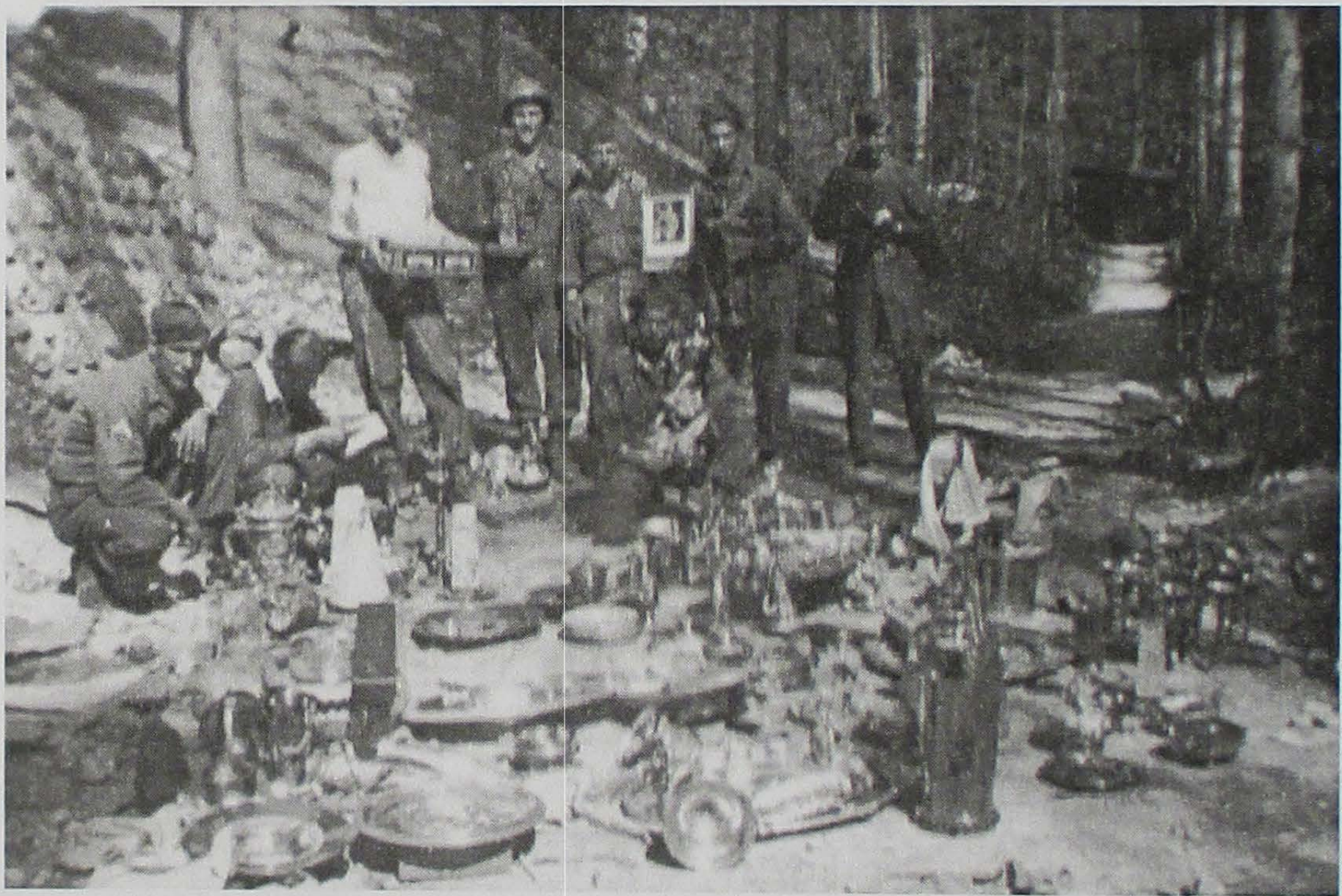
Munich, Germany
May 25, 1945

My Dearest Darling,

If they put us doing something besides chicken shit details, I think I'll go nuts. If nothing else I wish they would take us on a little tour through part of some beautiful Alp Mountains like we got to see at Berchtesgaden. I also would like to go into Austria and Switzerland. The show I went to see was 'Tonight and Every Night', with Rita Hayworth and Janet Blair. It was really good.

I took in another show with the fellows. It sure was swell. It was 'Hollywood Canteen'. You remember I told you I had been in Berchtesgaden. That's where Hitler's hideout was. It was also Goerring's home too. Well we were in on uncovering all the loot Goerring had hid away over there. I also got to handle and haul it to a place where it was put under guard. I will have to give you the details on it when I get home. You just can't imagine all the things they had in that place.

Your loving Hubby,
Ray



Some of the fellows and Goerring's loot.
Left to Right: Van Sellers, ----- Courtney, Jones, "Little Bit", Ries, Allen.



Thib and some of Goerring's loot discovered in May 1945, Berchtesgaden.



Some of Goerring's loot taken from his tunnel.

Munich, Germany
May 27, 1945

A Cigarette Date

To go on a cigarette date you go to 'Chesterfield' beyond 'Raleighs' tavern with 'Phillip Morris' then you have a 'Sensation' and if you don't look like a 'Camel' in 9 months then you have had a 'Lucky Strike'.

Everything over here is sure getting to be chicken shit like it was at Chaffee. Tomorrow we have rifle inspection and close order drill. Now isn't that something. Bullshit says I. I seen several shows lately but tonight we went down to the show house and they wouldn't let us in because we were from another outfit other than the outfit sponsoring the shows. Now wasn't that something for you. I went to church this morning and the chaplain sure gave us a swell sermon. I hope I can go every Sunday but you know the Army.

No darling, we aren't in the M.P.s yet but as you have already heard they are sure turning the men into M.P.s in a hurry. We are still the same old outfit. I can't tell you just what we were doing but while we were in Berchtesgadens we had a hand in handling all that loot that Goerring had stored away. We got some pictures of it. Some of the big towns that I came through were Ludwighaven, Heidelberg, Wurzburg, Heilbronn, Freudenstadt, Hechingen, Tübingen, and Salzburg. All the towns but Heidelberg were almost completely destroyed. Even Munich has the bigger share of the main part of town in ruins.

These damn Germans really know what it is to get a dose of their own medicine as far as warfare goes. These prison camps and prison hospitals are places that only those yellow bastards and the Germans could ever do so much and many horrible things as they have done and the Japs are still doing. I have sure thought a lot about Lawrence Dilly and a lot of other men I know that were prisoners of the supermen.



A familiar site after the long toms and the rest of the field artillery got done blasting the krauts out. Heilbronn April 1945.

Munich, Germany
May 29, 1945

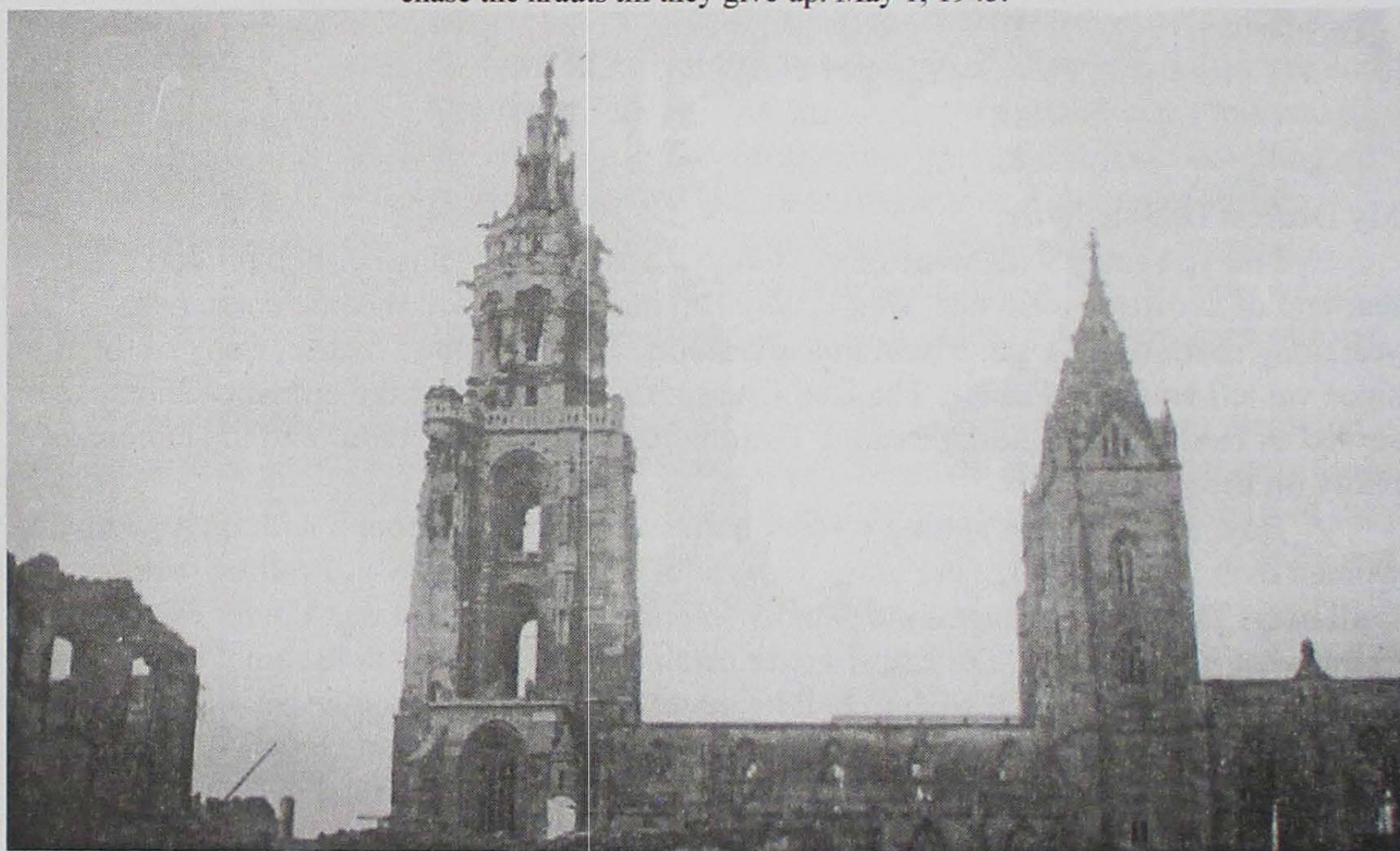
My Dearest Darling Wife,

I played catch with some of the fellows here at the ordnance shop till dark. The rear end of my truck went out. That is why I'm here at the shop. I came down here yesterday morning. We got a treat this afternoon. The first time I had seen any of them since we left southern France. The Red Cross girls stopped in at the ordnance shop and served us fresh donuts and lemonade. The donuts sure were delicious and the lemonade really hit the spot.

Boy, are they ever getting rough on the G.I.s that play around with these German women over here. They're sure going to be a lot of unhappy men and women before this is all over. They have changed the penalty so damn much on that that I don't even care to know what it is anymore. Oh yes, if I ever catch the so & so that stole some souvenirs out of my truck last night he'll wish to hell he never seen me or the souvenirs. Boy that sure made me mad. What he stole was two soup spoons out of Hermann Goerring's best silverware set. They announced it here at ordnance but they haven't showed up yet. Davis, that kid that used to be the mail clerk has gone to O.C.S. I sure hope he makes the grade.



An American tank in Munich, Germany moving through to chase the krauts till they give up. May 1, 1945.



This is one of the burnt out churches in Munich. All of the big churches in Munich are burned like this one. May 2, 1945.



This building is one of the many Gestapo Hdqts we took over in Munich. May 1, 1945.



Captured Jerry tank in Munich.
May 1, 1945.

Munich, Germany
May 30, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I got 'Wilma' all fixed up today and got back to the outfit. When I got back they told me about a chicken shit inspection which didn't set very well. Then I came over to the house where we are staying and found about half the guys drunk and messing around with some of these old German whores. Then they try to act so damn cute about it and it makes me so damn mad I could almost tear them apart.

I think tomorrow I am going to move out by myself and sleep in the back end of the truck in my sleeping bag and let them have their so called fun. I got a few more pictures today that I am sending you. The groups of guys are the Co. A drivers that was taken in southern France. Bob Thalhofer took the other picture of me and 'Wilma' just a few days ago.



S. Sgt Thibodaux and a captured Nazi fighter plane along the Autobahn highway between Munich and Salzburg. May 14, 1945.



German planes caught just as they are shown in the picture, on the field.



A German pursuit plane sitting in the timber along the Autobahn highway between Munich and Salzburg.

Berchtesgadens, Germany
May 31, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I am back down in Berchtesgadens again for a few days. I sure hope I see more of those big shots places. I also hope I can get some more souvenirs too. I am back from the show. It was a stage play of stunt performers and dancers. It was sure full of a lot of good laughs and fun. The stunts really cheered me up and to top the show off they had a man made donkey that shook the roof.

Munich, Germany
June 1, 1945

My Dearest darling Wife,

I just went to Berchtesgadens yesterday and they sent up for George Franko and I to bring our trucks back to Munich and we got here at 8:00 pm. When we got here they gave us hell for coming back and to top everything off we are to have a big inspection tomorrow and my truck is sure a muddy mess with all the rain we have been having. As yet we don't know a damn thing about the future. We are still working with the T-force trying to uncover hidden treasure and documents and plans that Hitler and his supermen had planned for the future. The people over here are sure getting a lot of boys in trouble. So many of the boys are letting their cocks lead them around.



This was taken at that big inspection. Just as I was getting the tools out, Albert hollered and I looked up and he took it. Munich, Germany.

Munich, Germany
June 2, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I am doggone tired after going through that damn inspection today. It sure was a ducky inspection if I must say so. Chicken shit is sure no name for it if I must say so. The motor sgt. told me 'Wilma' was one of the best trucks in the lot. I ran across a fellow in our outfit from Keota. He knows Herb well. He & Herb used to go to school together. His name is Morris and he is in 'C' Co. and has been with us all along. Since I put 'Iowa' on my truck I have run across a lot of fellows from different parts of Iowa.

Berchtesgadens, Germany
June 3, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We are living in a hotel down here and eating in a restaurant where they serve your food to you on plates and the tables even have tablecloths on them. Really getting classy aren't we. Ha, Ha. Being with the T-force as we are, they sure do give us the best of everything. I sure hope that we can stay with them 'till we come home to stay.

Your loving husband,
Ray

Berchtesgadens, Germany
June 5, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Statile, one of my buddies and I loaded a big load on the truck today. It was sure a heavy load too. I am taking it to Munich tomorrow morning. I sure saw a swell movie last night and it sure did make me lonesome for you sweetheart. The name of the movie was 'When Irish Eyes are Smiling'. Dick Zandell and I are going to the show again tonight. I am enclosing some more pictures I got from S.Sgt Thibodaux that he took for me and gave to me. He sure has been treating me swell.

Berchtesgadens, Germany
June 6, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I didn't get to take the load I have on 'Wilma' to Munich today so we have had to guard her all night and today and all night again. All the men not on duty have had the day to do as they please so all the fellows here at Berchtesgadens but six of us went to the Brenner Pass on a sight seeing tour.

Your loving Ray

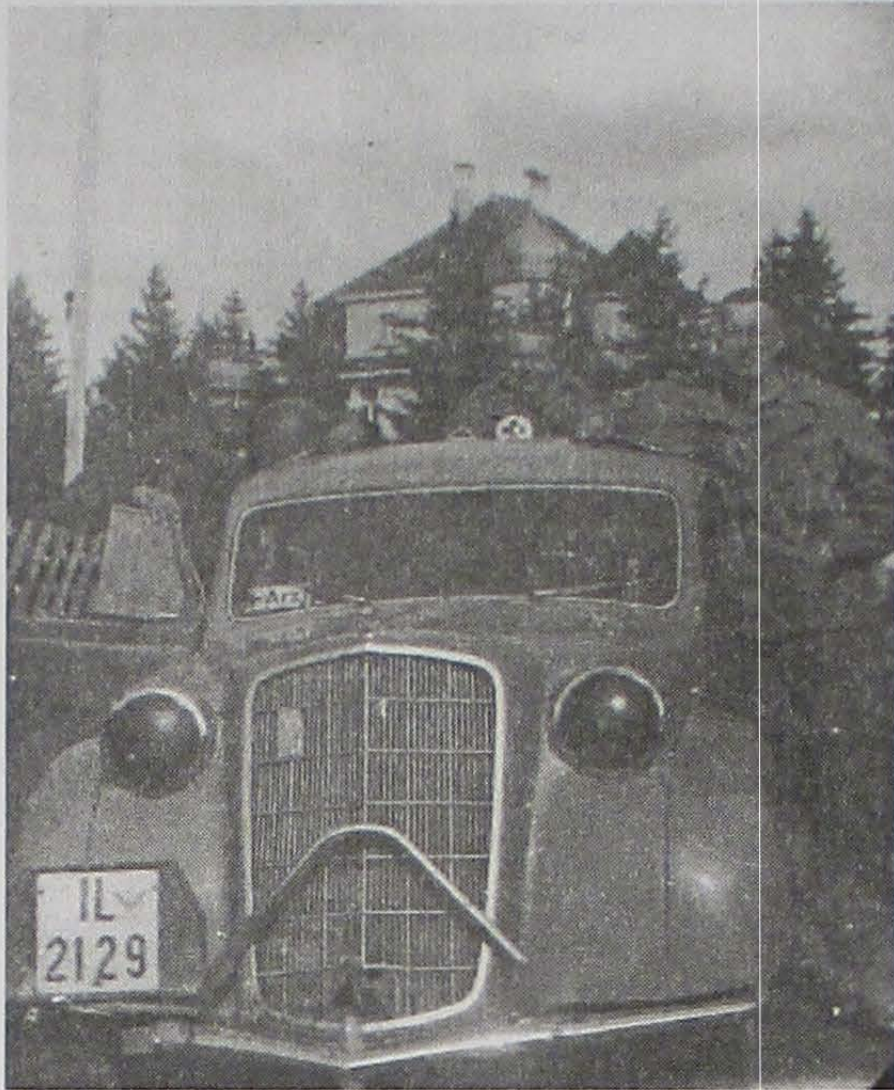
Berchtesgadens, Germany
June 8, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I had to go out and get Lt. Jones and two of the boys that went deer hunting up in the mountains. When I got out there, here they come down a mountain trail dragging a big buck deer. They sure got a nice deer but they also got soaking wet.

It's a little past 6:30 am and "Old Jonesy" decided he wanted to go fishing and my truck was the only one here so I had to get up and take him and Sgt. Hendrickson out here along the big mountain stream about 10 miles. I hope they get soaking wet. Since we are in Berchtesgadens, all Jones and the two sgts do is eat, sleep, fish and hunt while the rest of us do the work.

The T-force is always uncovering something for us to haul. The other day they uncovered $\frac{3}{4}$ of Europe's radium that had been stolen and hidden away. It's value is way up in the millions of dollars. They also uncovered some silver bars and loot that is valued at about 10 million. So you see some of the stuff 'Wilma' hauls is pretty high priced Ha, Ha. These damn Germans have hid away more loot and priceless goods than you can ever shake a stick at.



Robert Day, "Doc" Whitener, and Scott E Hackmann and their 'Kraut Car' in Hechingen, Germany. They drove the car till it wouldn't run no more and then sold it to the French for \$200.00 Ha, Ha.



"Cowboy Thib" standing in Apple Orchard at Sarhbadd, Germany. We were shelled continuously for 2 days here. April, 1945.



Thib and Rader standing by the town post in this village we had just taken over. April 1945.



3 German Officers as they came up the road to surrender to us fellows on May 6, 1945 in Berchtesgaden.

Berchtesgadens, Germany
June 9, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

There is a rumor going around up here that old Jones is transferring out of the Engineers into the Infantry. I sure hope that he does because he sure is a big pain in the so & so. It will sure be a good riddance because there isn't anyone that likes him in the outfit.

We have been forbidden to tell anything about the route we took over here but now we can mention a few of the places along the line. When we came up from S. France we stopped at Lyon and of course some of the boys played around and five of them got doses out of our platoon so we had to leave them in Frankenthal, Germany at a medic camp. Then we moved into Ludwighaven with the infantry where we took over the biggest chemical plant in Germany. Then we moved across the Rhine River with the infantry to Mannheim where we took over a big prison. What a sad sight and a hell hole. Our Battalion also took over a big truck plant that had about 2,000 trucks on the production assembly line. What a sight that was. Then we moved to Heidelberg where I wrote you about the beer. Ha, Ha. That was Germany's greatest college too.

While we were there we also took over a political prison. They had 150 men and 90 women there. They were all young people between the ages of 16 and 35. Then we moved to Wurzburg for about two weeks but all there was left of the town after the field artillery got done was a big mass of rubble. There wasn't a building left standing in the main part of town. Just a few homes and buildings scattered around the edges of the city were left in the ghost town and I mean ghost city. The first morning we were there I had to go look around. Just at daybreak, that was sure a hell of a feeling for me to wander around with all those shells popping around.

After we left Wurzburg we really covered country. We went to Heidelberg, Hechingen, Tübingen, Horb, Augsburg, and then we landed in Munich. Our first place there was a big SS center where I got all those knives I sent to you. We landed there May 1st and it really snowed just like it does in March. We only stayed there about three days and our platoon came on to Berchtesgadens where we have really been uncovering documents and loot galore. That isn't all the places I have been but we will have to wait until I get home to give you the details. A lot of places I want to forget about completely. Darling, I am going to sign off and go to the show, it is a good one. 'Thunderhead', a picture like 'Flicker', a horse picture.



Lt. Eckberg sitting on rail fence at house in Berchtesgaden. May 7, 1945.



Ketchum, Hanna, Hungate, and Thibodaux in front of our house in Berchtesgaden when war ended. May 7, 1945.

Berchtesgaden, Germany
June 10, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We hauled the highest value stuff yesterday as far as military value goes yet. It was Himmler's private files of everyone in the Jerry army. It took 2 trucks to haul all of them. I got a surprise yesterday. I ran into one of the guys who was in on getting Goerring's loot and I bought Goerring's personal table cloth that went with the silver set that the spoons was to that I had stolen. I am going to try and get it in the mail today or tomorrow.

Munich, Germany
June 14, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We are to move to Heilbronn or some place near there. The 3rd Army has taken over all around here so we have to move over into 7th Army territory. So far from the sounds of that we are still in the 7th Army and they are supposed to be occupational troops and I sure hope we are so that old White won't get us into the Pacific. The old so & so is sue trying to get us over there but so far they have told him that he might go but his outfit won't.

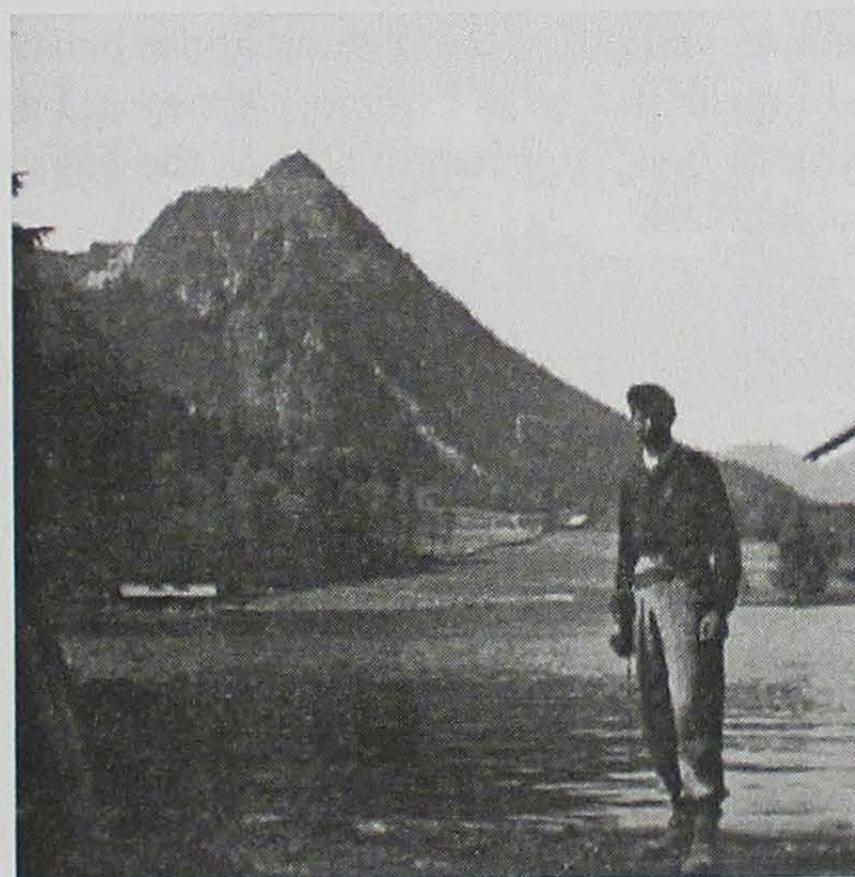
I went to Augsburg today. That is where the Battalion C.P. is located so that is where we have to go to get the mail. I have to get up when that damn bugle blows in the morning. Now aint that the shits that they have to be so G.I. but they are getting worse over here than they were at Chaffee and you know how they were down there sweetheart.



T-force armored cars in a small village in the mountains below Berchtesgaden. May 1945.



Town clocks in Bad Reichenbach on way to Berchtesgaden on Route 305. May 1945.



"Eggbeater" standing at edge of one of the many mountain lakes around Berchtesgaden. May, 1945.

Bad Rappenau, Germany
Sunday eve June 17, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

With the war over here, they sure are getting G.I. as the devil. Some of the ways over here are even worse than at Chaffee and if they keep on the way they have started a guy will almost have to ask permission to go to the toilet. Ha, Ha.

Boy are they getting tough on the fraternization rules over here. Three medics from another outfit are up for life terms in prison. Well if the men can't behave themselves it's to damn bad.

Bad Rappenau, Germany
June 18, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

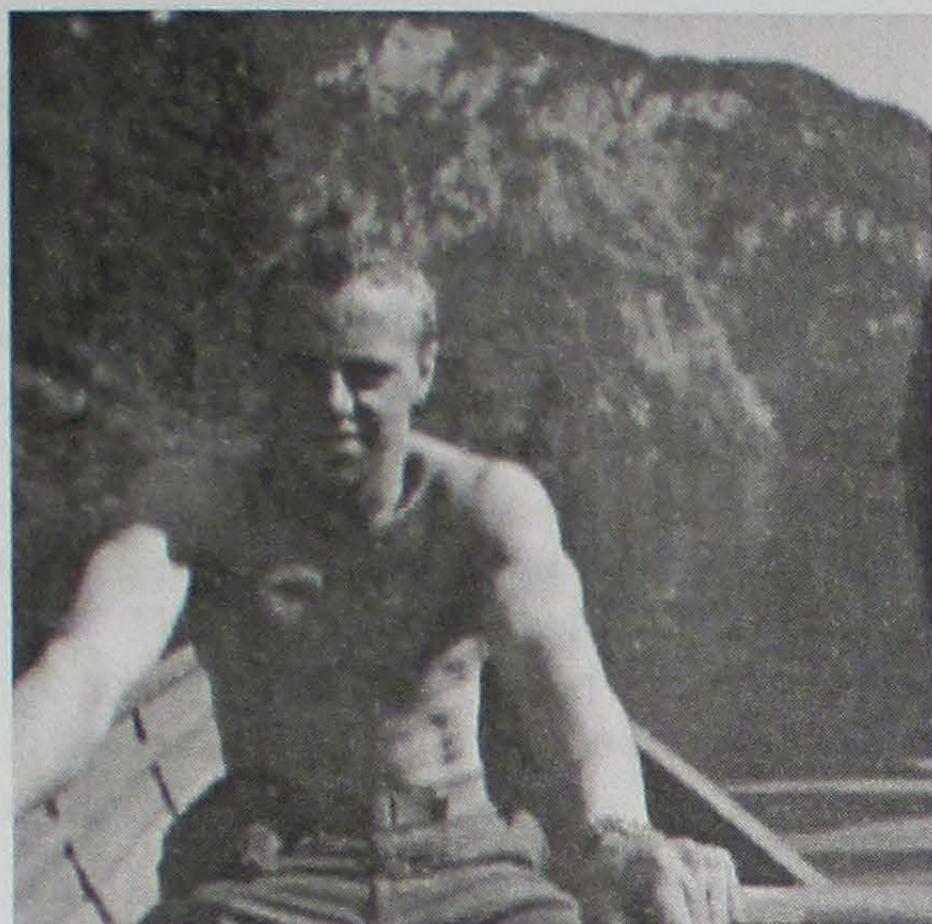
I am sitting on the ground leaning against the rear duals on 'Wilma' in the motor pool, what a position. Ha, ha. By golly I just got proof of this too because Lloyd Abney just now took my picture setting here. Ha, ha.

They sure are clamping down on the fraternization here in this town too. They caught 4 guys last nite from another outfit and it is going to be rough on them too. 30 years is one hell of a long time for talking to a German. I guess I am getting to be an old hermit because I don't have much time for the guys since the trouble we had back in Munich when Dick Zandell, Lloyd Abney, Rodney Lindstrom, and Berchman Chaumont and I moved out of the platoon house because they were running a platoon whore house and I mean just what I say to. Abney & I are still sleeping in the truck and I think I will continue because a hell of a lot of the boys caught venereal diseases from the gals in Munich.

Bad Rappenau, Germany
June 19, 1945

My Darling Wife,

There are so many old bucks in the outfit besides a lot of 85 point men to be discharged so I hope the rumors are true.



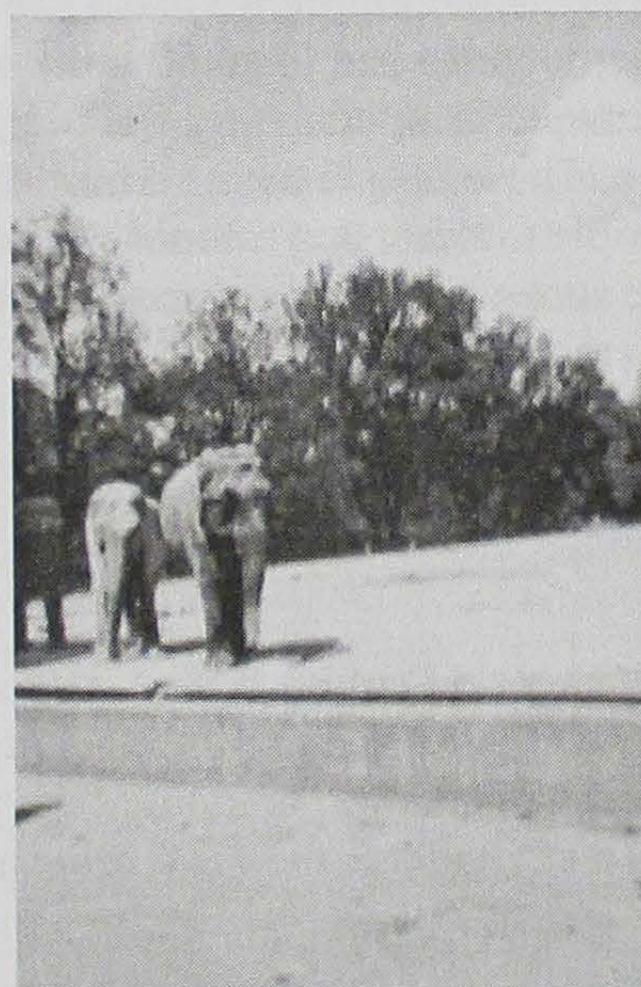
Robert Day rowing on lake at Berchtesgaden.



Resting at Bad Rappenau. June 18, 1945



Prison camp at Heildbronn. SS Prisoners.



Zoo at Munich.

Bad Rappenau, Krautland
June 25, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I was interrupted in my letter writing tonight by the Captain. He came out where four of us were writing letters and started talking about things we had been doing and it wound up being a general old fashioned "Bull" session and I mean just that because he was very talkative and very interested in us for a change. Can you imagine that. Ha,ha.

The Captain just got back from Paris and in a very talking mood and we sure pound the questions at him and tried to answer all of his. He thinks we are coming to the states in a few months.

Your Loving Hubby,
Ray

Bad Rappenau, Germany
June 28, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

All morning we had a show down inspection of everything we own and in the afternoon we had to go 60 miles to see a damn picture about beating Japan. I got some more pictures today of the country, two of myself and one of the elephants at the Munich zoo. These people over here are the queerest tribe or race you ever saw. For a race of people to think they should or would like to rule the world of all of them I have seen they are sure a hell of a poor example of cripples, insanes and diseased. I hope I never see anymore of them.

Bad Rappenau, Germany
June 30, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I just heard a rumor but not sure how true it is. Well here it is. Our outfit had just missed the highest amount of days in the front lines by just four days of any outfit in the E.T.O Dog gone, they just came around and said I was on guard again tonight.

Bad Rappenau, Germany
July 3, 1945

My Darling,

They took all of the guys with 85 points out of the outfit today.

Bad Rappenau, Germany
July 6, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I am sure glad the boxes are coming through. I was wondering about those rifles and you should get another shotgun before long. They are all swell guns and they will be good hunting guns if they come through O.K. I got both .22 cal rifles in a Gestapo Hdq. in Heidelberg when we first went there. The shotgun that's on the way, I took away from a damn jerry that was shooting it at us as we went down the street in Hechingen. When the boys fired back he changed his mind in a hurry. He came down and handed me his shotgun PDQ.

The high silk hat I got out of a big shots house in Munich. He sure didn't want to let it go but when we took him to the M.P.s he sure changed his line of talk and before I left he said I could have it. He was a tax collector for the Nazi Party. He is put away for a long time now though.

Heidelberg, Germany
July 7, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We passed our inspection with flying colors and the Captain felt so good about it, he gave all of us in the motor pool passes. We went to the Red Cross at 7:30 and seen a sign about the show, 'Home in Indiana' in Technicolor. We went to it and then I remembered the show because sweetheart, you and I saw it someplace.

Bad Rappenau, Germany
July 10, 1945

My Darling Wife,

The pink napkins came from one of Hitler's private lunch rooms in Berchtesgaden. We are in the 84th Division's territory right now and are about 30 miles southeast of Heidelberg and about 10 miles northwest of Heilbronn in a little village 2 miles from Winfen or Bad Winfen.

Bad Rappenau
July 12, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

In the June 11th Life Magazine, they have a write up about the loot that was uncovered by us at Berchtesgaden but they gave all the credit to the 101st Airborne Division and believe me honey, the boys are sure mad about it and they sure wrote Life magazine a letter about it too. I sure hope they correct the error but just a platoon's word against a Division's don't stand much of a chance. Some of our boys were in the pictures. The picture they took of my truck isn't there but the one they took is of a T-force truck. That's the way it goes when a guy thinks he is going to get some publicity. Ha,ha.

St. Ilgen, Germany
July 15, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We moved again today into this little town. It seems to be a nice little village. Some of the boys just came in from the Company CP and said there was no mail and wouldn't be any until next Wednesday. Now isn't that something for the books. This damn outfit is getting worse everyday instead of better. They are getting to the point where I hope some big shot steps in and puts the clamps on some of these so called big shots we got including Col. White, the old so & so. We have a whole damn village to our own company and as soon as White finds out he'll want to move in with us so he can dish out some more of his chicken _____. They are treating us more like a bunch of 6 yr old kids than a bunch of men. It makes me so damn mad I could fly the coop.

Boy, I don't know if I am going to like this place or not. The old people seem to be very glad to have us here but the 100 & one kids climbing all over the place are sure getting to be a nuisance already. Bob Thalhofer just caught a girl about 8 yrs old trying to steal some of his candy and cigarettes. I guess that seems to come just natural though.

St. Ilgen, Germany
July 16, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

Oh yes honey, those knives with the SS on the handle came from the big SS Headquarters in Munich. How many knives were in the box honey? Some of the boys have heard that not all of their stuff has been getting home that they have sent in boxes. I sure hope my last 2 boxes from Berchtesgaden get there.

St. Ilgen, Germany
Sunday July 22, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I went to Mannheim to try and find some beer for our Co. beer hall we have in this town. The boys seem to like it pretty well so we are trying to get some more beer to keep it going but our luck wasn't good in Mannheim because we didn't have the proper papers signed by some big "Shit"! We are going to try and find some tomorrow.

I got my first bottle of Coca-Cola since I left the good old U.S.A. It sure did taste delicious. This morning they had a formation in the company and gave each man a paper from T-force. A citation for the work we done while the war was going on. I also got a badge coming for excellent driving during the war. We also were issued our combat stars and ETO ribbons.

We had a little excitement in the next village (Sandhausen) yesterday. The 84th Division had a shake down all over the whole district 20 miles around Heidelberg and they sure did uncover a lot of things in their search. In Sandhausen they searched a house and found a Jerry machine gun, Ammunition, G.I. clothes, shoes, boxes of food stuffs and numerous items of military value. It sure will be tough on the krauts where they found the stuff too. The penalty over here for the persons concealing the weapons is death, so you can imagine what that shake down done to the people.

There was a negro quartermaster supply outfit connected to the shakedown and it is going to go rough on them too when they get the evidence on the persons that done the actual dealings. Some of these damn negroes traded their own food to German women for some screwing. Can you imagine that? So you can see what is going to happen when those southern negroes get back home and try to screw a white girl. There is going to be a lot of trouble.



Men of the 1269th at work.

HEADQUARTERS 6TH ARMY GROUP
APO 23, U. S. ARMY

30 June 1945.

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding Officer, "T" Force, 6th Army Group

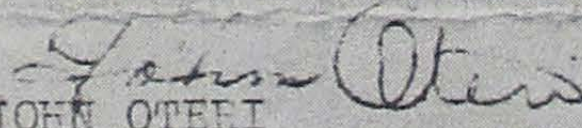
1. The Commanding General is pleased to give official recognition to all officers and men of the 6th Army Group "T" Force for outstanding performance of duty during the period 22 November 1944 to 8 May 1945.

2. Organized as an intelligence assault force, you have served as the operational arm of G-2 in the field. By seizing and protecting targets of the utmost importance in Alsace and in Germany, thereby aiding in the production of critical intelligence, the "T" Force contributed directly and successfully to the imposition of the Supreme Commander's will on the enemy along the entire front. The immediacy and exacting nature of your task required that you operate in the very front lines, frequently clearing the enemy by actual combat from important objectives before their destruction could be accomplished. The low number of casualties suffered, the excellence of the results obtained, the reliance placed upon the "T" Force, all are significant of the complete success which have marked its operations.

3. The exemplary conduct and soldierly bearing of the personnel have helped to earn for the insignia of the 6th Army Group the respect it everywhere enjoys. By your initiative and devotion to duty each officer and enlisted man has merited the commendation of the Army Group Commander.

s/ David G. Barr
t/ DAVID G. BARR
Major General, GSC,
Chief of Staff

CERTIFIED A TRUE COPY:


JOHN OTERI
CWO, USA,
Adjutant.

T-Force Commendation.

B/L, Hqs. 6th Army Group, APO 23, U.S. Army, subject:
Commendation, dated 30 June 1945. Cont'd:

1st Ind WW/eam
Headquarters, 1269th Engineer Combat Battalion, APO 758,
U. S. Army, 18 July 1945.

TO: All Personnel, 1269th Engineer Combat Battalion,
APO 758, U. S. Army.

1. Copy of the Commanding General's commendation is
submitted to you with pleasure and pride on part of the
undersigned.

2. As a member of T Force since its entry into Ger-
many you can be justly proud of this commendation because
of the excellent work which you have accomplished.

Willard White
WILLARD WHITE
Lt Col CE,
Commanding.

TO: Taylor, James R, Pfc, ASN 37691686, Co A, 1269th Engr C Bn
APO 758, U. S. Army.

St. Ilgen, Germany
July 23, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I just got in from a patrol ride with 1st Sgt. Stewart. We are looking for one of our bad boys that can't behave himself anymore. He and one other guy are starting to serve time in the stockade tomorrow for 6 months. They got drunk and shot and tore up some Govt. property.



1st Sergeant W.M. Stewart and Chiggers, the mascot of "A" Co.
"Chiggers" was smuggled on the boat going over and was with the outfit all the time, and we smuggled him back again to the states.

Mannheim, Germany
July 27, 1945

My Darling Wife,

No mail for us in the 2nd Platoon 'cause we moved over here to Mannheim. We moved this morning and I hauled prisoners and supplies this afternoon. We have a great big building all to ourselves, private rooms, nice showers, PW's to clean up the place for us.



Ray Taylor and Dick Zandell.



Ray Taylor in a German Village.

Mannheim, Germany
July 30, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

I just got back from Heidelberg and we got a slam in the face with news. We are losing Col. White and quite a few of our officers. The outfit is being broken up and we are to be put in other engineer outfits. I went to the show tonight, "Practically Yours", with Fred McMurray and Paulette Goddard. It sure was a swell movie. The rest of the company moved up here with us tonight so I suppose the old chicken shit will start again tomorrow. It sure is too bad they can't leave us alone once in a while. Tomorrow we are to get paid, turn in equipment and have a clothing check.

Your Loving Hubby,
Ray

Mannheim, Germany

July 31, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We have been working all day hauling coal, hauling PW's so I need a bath. At St. Ilgen all you could do is sponge off. I must quit now and take 'Wilma' for one of our last runs for the 1269th. I sure hate to give her up but if it's a chance to get home to you, I don't mind at all.

Mannheim, Germany

Aug 3, 1945

My Darling Wife,

Well honey, things are starting to happen around here. Tomorrow A co. moves B co. to Marburg, Germany, a deployment center. We have to turn in our trucks tomorrow on Sunday so I have to start carrying my stuff myself. Ha, ha.

Marburg, Germany

Aug 6, 1945

My Darling Wife,

I am now in a repo depot being checked over for the trip home to you sweetheart. Old Col. White was out to see us off yesterday. Trying to talk to a lot of the boys and telling them how it hurt him to see his boys leave and him not going with them. Ha, ha. Well by the time he gets home he'll wish he had done things a little different. Darling, Zandell & Kerr are after me to go to the movie so I must sign off.

Marburg, Germany

Aug 8, 1945

My Dearest Darling Wife,

We are supposed to sign our furlough papers anytime now. I sure hope they don't hold us around here to darn much longer because everyday now the chicken _____ is getting deeper and deeper.

Yesterday morning we had close order drill, physical exercises and then a film. In the afternoon some more drilling and then some more shows. I twisted my leg so this morning I went on sick call. It is Chow time "sweetheart". Hello, that is over now and it sure as hell wasn't worth the trouble to stand in line for 20 minutes for that kind of supper. 1 spoon of brazed beef, 1 spoon of bean soup, 1 spoon of lemon cream, 1 slice of bread and 1/2 cup of coffee.

Marburg, Germany
Aug 11, 1945

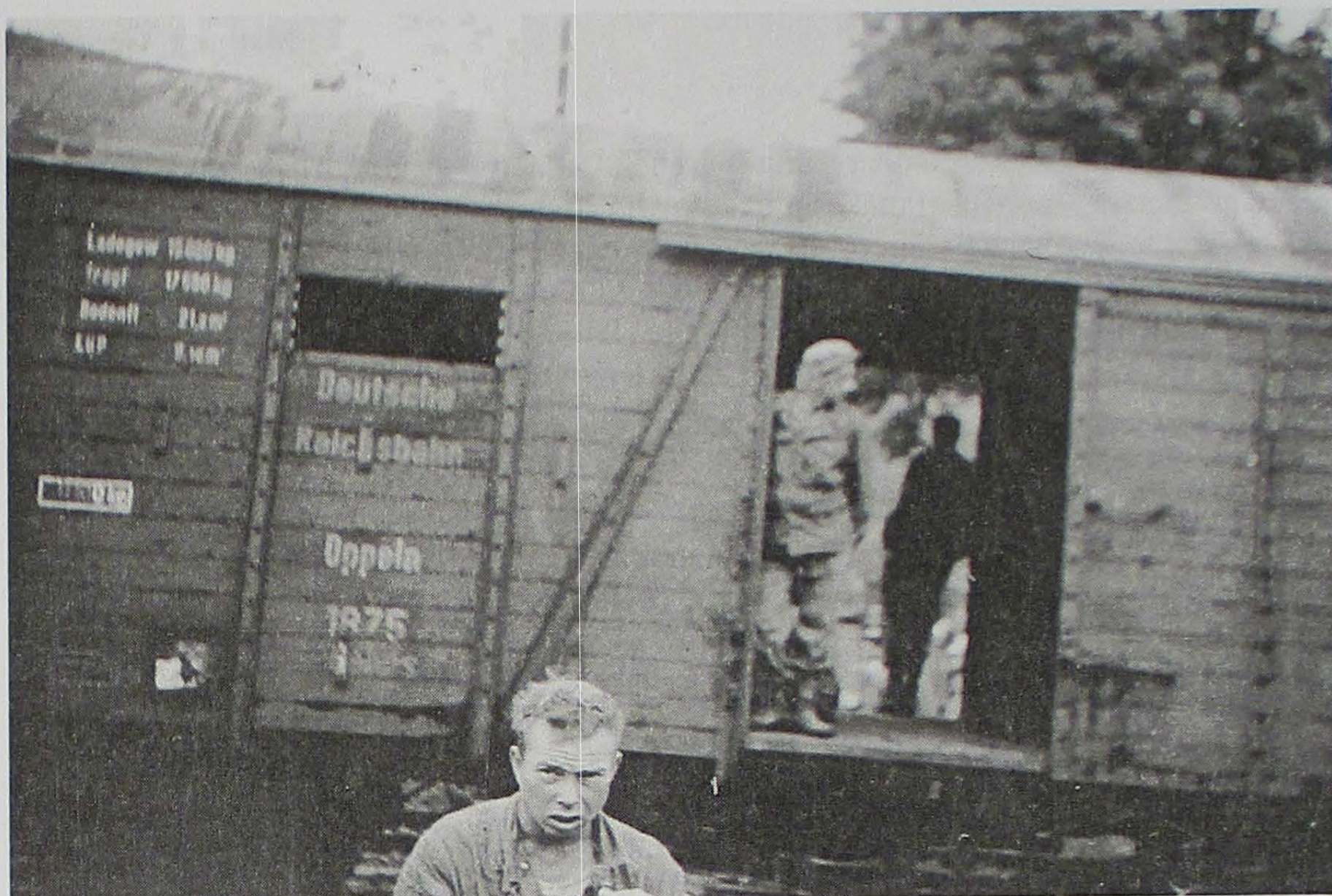
My Dearest Darling Wife,

They called the shipment names off and my name was on the list. Zandell and I are to go together too which makes it that much better. We are living in tents. I am not alone because there are about 15,000 more like me. We got a false rumor yesterday that the war was over and the fellows sure did raise a lot of whoopee.





Remember what you told me about the clothes you were wearing? Well you won't be wearing all of them when I get home so you better get prepared. Ha, ha.



Herman Plalen & I on our way from Marburg, Germany to Antwerp, Belgium. We spent 3 nights and 2 days in these damn 40X8 boxcars. It rained 2 out of 3 nights.



2 of the fellows taking in the sites from the train. McDowell from Waterloo and Leon Mitten from Kansas City. We were all just as tough as Mitten looks. Ha Ha.

	ARMY SERVICE FORCES TRANSPORTATION CORPS ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES	
NEW YORK PORT OF EMBARKATION		
<p><i>Pl. James R. Taylor</i> <i>A.S.N. 37621686</i></p>		
<p>returned to the UNITED STATES on the ship <i>U.S.S. "Victory Ship"</i> which sailed from <i>Antwerp, Belgium</i> on <i>Aug. 20, 1945</i></p>		
	<p>Sig. <i>Joseph P. Bennett Jr.</i> Title <i>1st Lt.</i></p>	

Souvenir from the voyage home.

January 18, 20010

Ames Historical Society
ATTN: Sara

As we discussed during our conversation on December 22, attached find a copy of the book "Ames to Berchtesgarden", which is a compilation of letters home from my father, James R Taylor (Ray) to my mother, Wilma.

The letters were all written during WWII. One of my sons went thru all of Dad's letters home & put together these excerpts and pictures. Dad grew up on South Sherman and graduated from Ames High School. He became a member of the Ames Police Department in the 1950's and 60's, achieving the rank of Sergeant before his medical retirement from the force. Mom grew up in Gilbert and worked at Collegiate Manufacturing during the war making rain coats for soldiers.

Much of it is of personal interest to the family, but I hope that you will find some things in here also, things that may enrich the understanding of that period.

I was pleased at your interest in the booklet and am happy to share it with you.

Janet Herink
2134 Tenth Street Place
Nevada IA 50201

Thanked
3/12/10
EV



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